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The Informer

A monthly newsletter addressing workplace safety by Iowa Municipalities Workers' Compensation Association.

Keep records up to date

Changing seasons usually mean new projects. It is also a time to remember to keep a variety of workplace records up to date. This can often be a chore, but without documentation of your efforts it is difficult to prove the activities ever took place. Keeping current with your documentation can save you time and avoid stress down the road.

Employee Training Records: Conducting effective employee training, whether on safety or another work-related topic, is a critical aspect of being a good employer. It is also critical that you document this training. One of our loss control team members often says, "If it is not documented, it didn't happen."

Documentation should include: list of attendees, topic, date, location, provider, instructor (if applicable), and when possible copies of any materials or handouts. Documentation should also include test/quiz questions and how attendees performed or scored. IMWCA's free Online University can help document all of these items, even for trainings conducted outside the online system.

Equipment Use Training: Employees who use various types of equipment in the course of their duties are required to have training to avoid injury and misuse. This includes (but is not limited to) equipment such as ladders, power tools, chainsaws, and on- and off-road vehicles. Training should include the basics of pre- and post-use inspection and how to operate the equipment in actual applications.

As with other training, these activities need to be documented.

Volunteer Firefighter Criteria: For members with a volunteer fire department, IMWCA has a specific set of criteria that must be followed. Maintain documentation pertaining to the adoption of required policies; respiratory protection program including fit testing; required firefighter physicals for new firefighters; and ongoing five year physicals for incumbent firefighters.

IMWCA loss control staff need to see documentation showing adherence with the volunteer firefighter criteria. Keeping the documentation up to date will greatly assist with this process.

Information on the IMWCA Volunteer Firefighter Criteria can be found at www.imwca.org > Loss Control > Firefighter Programs.

In some communities firefighters are directly involved with setting off pyrotechnics. These firefighters should receive applicable training from a qualified entity certifying them to conduct these activities. This training and certification should also be documented.

OSHA Logs: Do not forget to maintain your required Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) injury logs. This will make it easier when it comes time to compile and post your annual 300A Form - Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses.

As a reminder, IMWCA offers Tracker, a free software program to help track workplace injuries through the year. For more information on accessing and utilizing Tracker, contact Lisa Mart, human resources specialist, at lisamart@iowaleague.org.



Short safety meetings

A quick and practical way to address safety and to keep it in front of employees is to utilize tailgate talks. The term tailgate meetings comes from the practice of meeting around the tailgate of a pickup truck at the beginning of the workday.

Generally these short meetings are conducted by a supervisor or an appointed safety coordinator at the job site prior to the start of a job or work shift. The purpose of the talk is to discuss the work at hand; identify the associated risks; and ensure the necessary safe work practices, policies and equipment are in place. The goal is to heighten employees' awareness of specific hazards associated with a task, to serve as a reminder of what they already know, and to reinforce the importance of complying with these safety policies and procedures.

This same practice can also be put to use in an administrative setting. Tens of thousands of office workers suffer injuries or work-related health problems that lead to lost time every year. While the potential for injury may not be as dramatic, it can be every bit as costly to employers.

Taking a few minutes at the beginning of every work day to address safety is a great way to convey a strong message to employees that they are your most valuable resource. As with any safety training, a record of these short meetings should be kept and maintained.

Check future issues of *the Informer* for tailgate topic ideas, and consider how your workplace could use brief safety reminders to ensure everyone goes home safe each day.

Renewals coming in May

Renewal packets for the upcoming 2019-2020 policy period are currently being processed. IMWCA will begin mailing the renewal packets on May 13. Each packet will include an updated declarations page, estimated premium schedule and experience modification worksheet (if applicable).

The National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) sets the class code rates, which are approved by the State of Iowa Insurance Commissioner. All insurance carriers in Iowa use NCCI rates. For the class codes used by IMWCA members, we are seeing a rate decrease of approximately 6 percent for 2019-2020. With members experiencing an average discount of 42 percent for the 2019-2020 policy period, IMWCA will continue to provide affordable workers' compensation premiums through our discount rating plan. Many members will also enjoy our Good Experience Bonus, which is an additional discount for members with an experience modification factor (MOD) of 0.95 or lower.

Your local agent will also receive a copy of the renewal. Specific questions concerning your MOD or renewal can be directed to your agent or Andrew Justice at IMWCA at (515)-974-5341 or andrewjustice@iowaleague.org.



What is WISH?

In May 2003, IMWCA developed the Workplace Initiative for Safety & Health (WISH) program to help educate members and their employees about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. At the time, WISH was intended to serve as a supplement to wellness programs members were developing or already had in place.

Not much has changed in the WISH program since then. Articles still appear regularly in the *Informer* newsletter which tackle subjects related to a healthy work environment, disease and illness prevention, self care and nutrition. For the past 15 years IMWCA has also sponsored a non-competitive 5K run/walk event, part of the WISH program, at the Iowa League of Cities Annual Conference & Exhibit.

However, a few things have changed since 2003. More and more employers are offering wellness programs.



2017 Run/Walk in Davenport

According the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 63 percent of state and local government employees had access to wellness programs in 2017. Just 52 percent of those employees had access in 2008.

In addition, more studies are showing the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, to individuals and to employers. Healthy employees are more focused and aware, which generally reduces the risk of a job-related injury. Healthy employees also take fewer sick days and are more engaged while at work.

So send your article ideas our way. And enjoy the reminders to take care of yourself, and share the tips with your coworkers. These articles are one more way IMWCA is helping members send employees home safe, and healthy, at the end of each day.

Safety. It is your responsibility.

Regardless of title - front line supervisor, manager or elected official - many of you are involved in managing employees. It doesn't matter if you are directing the employee's day-to-day duties, completing a performance evaluation, overseeing a manager of employees, or voting to approve a new hire's employment and wage, you all have a role in providing a safe work place for employees.

Many times current employees are promoted into a manager role because they are high performers who know the job well. Other times, frankly, there is no one else to consider. Too often when employees are promoted or placed in management/supervisor roles they are provided no formal preparation or training. On day one the new manager is magically expected to know how to be a manager, which employment laws apply, and how to motivate and run a department of different personalities. These new managers often function by putting out the closest and hottest fire while overlooking other areas, especially if there are no current issues.

Employee safety and well-being is repeatedly overlooked. "Why change it if nothing is broken," and, "We have done it this way for 30 years," mindsets are justifications to keep with status quo. But talk with any manager who has lost an employee or had an employee suffer



a life changing injury. They will usually say they should have done something different or better; the incident could have been prevented by setting the expectation and holding their employee accountable.

At the bare minimum employers (front line supervisors, managers and elected officials) should be providing initial and continuous safety training specific to each employees' role. Safety policies, practices and expectations should be defined, reviewed and enforced the same as any other work policy. Unsafe working conditions should be corrected immediately and all incidents regardless of an injury (or not) should be investigated as soon as possible.

For more information on your responsibility to provide a safe work environment contact your IMWCA loss control representative or human resources specialist. It is our mission to help you send your employees home safe each day.

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Comments or suggestions: contact Bethany Crile, newsletter editor, at (515) 244-7282 or bethanycrile@iowaleague.org.

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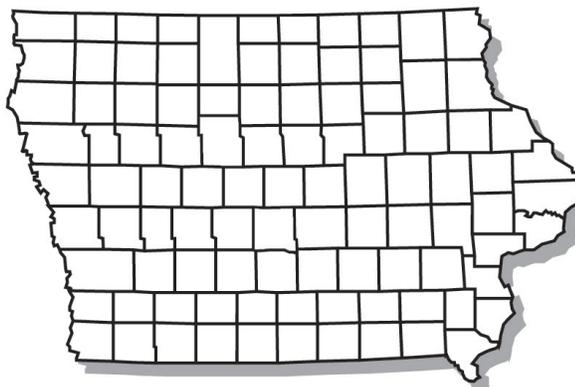
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IMWCA welcomes our newest members!

These members have joined since October 2018.

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