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The Informer

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

City of Urbandale reaches new low

As we start the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year, the city of Urbandale proudly boasts the lowest experience modification factor (EMF or MOD) of any IMWCA member for the third straight year. This year the city will have a .58 EMF, a decline from last year's .59.

How did they do it?

Karla Lower, human resources director and safety coordinator, attributes it to the following:

Aggressive, mandatory safety training for all employees.

Before an employee can be expected to work safely, they have to be taught what the risks are and what the city procedures are to address those risks.

New employees are mentored in safety by seasoned employees.

From the beginning of employment the new employee understands the right way to perform assigned tasks, and that unsafe shortcuts are not tolerated. The city is also serious about enforcement of safety rules and uses a combination of coaching and discipline when necessary.

Requiring employees to follow proper safety setup of work areas.

Taking the time and attention to detail are vital to having a safe work zone.

Employees look out for each other.

Coworkers make sure safety practices are followed and no one gets hurt. The culture the city is developing empowers one employee to speak out to another

employee if they see an unsafe behavior that needs to be corrected, without anyone feeling embarrassed or getting angry.

In addition, Urbandale also has exceptional management support. This includes performance reviews for all staff with a safety component. The city manager and all department heads work with Lower to ensure the performance reviews reflect the safety effort of each employee, and to review what is being recommended to change any substandard performance. In Urbandale the employees and supervisors understand that safety is an integral part of their job. In addition to normal job performance parameters, they are also being evaluated on their efforts to remain safety-incident free each annual review period.

The city has regular safety committee and incident review meetings. Feedback from the meetings is documented and shared with staff. The city performs workplace safety audits to monitor progress with safety efforts and to identify any new areas that need to be strengthened. The city also actively uses IMWCA's Online University for their employees.

Urbandale also has a strong return-to-work program, including a temporary alternate duty feature, and an active designated physician program.

Rather than safety being an add-on to the city workplace, Urbandale has put safety in the workplace on the same

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Walking, our first form of transportation, is also some of the best exercise available. And there's little or no cost.

According to the American Heart Association, walking is the best medicine for a healthy heart. Walking briskly can lower your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. A national study analyzed 33,000 runners and 15,045 walkers. The study found the same energy used for moderate intensity walking and vigorous intensity running resulted in similar reductions in risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and possibly coronary heart disease over the study's six year period.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that about half of all adults get enough aerobic activity to improve their health. Walking is the most popular aerobic activity, and according to the CDC adults who walk for transportation, fun, or exercise went up 6 percent in the last five years. The CDC has lots of data and many suggestions to help improve our health and walkability.

Local government can:

- Consider walking when creating long-range plans
- Design streets and roadways that are safe for pedestrians as well as other road users
- Make sure existing sidewalks and walking paths are kept in good condition

Employers can:

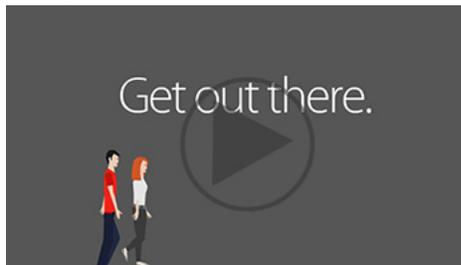
- Create and support walking programs for employees (the Iowa League of Cities and IMWCA promote a Weekly Wednesday Wellness Walk!)
- Identify walking paths around or near the workplace
- Provide places at work to shower or change clothes, when possible

Individuals can:

- Start a walking group with friends at work or at home
- Use crosswalks when crossing streets and not jaywalk
- Help others walk more safely by driving the speed limit and yielding to pedestrians

The next time you circle the parking lot at the grocery store looking for a parking spot, think again. Park at the end of the lot and walk. Your health will improve, and as an added bonus you may find fewer dings in your car.

Join the IMWCA-sponsored 5K Run/Walk at the League's Annual Conference & Exhibit. The non-competitive walk or



run takes place the morning of Thursday, September 28 along the scenic Mississippi River in Davenport. Sign-up online when you

register for the whole conference at www.iowaleague.org.

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level as quality of work and high customer satisfaction. This culture has led to the city earning a 60 percent reduction in their workers' compensation premium. And even more importantly, more employees return home safe at the end of each day.

Save the date for safety

The 2017 One-Day Safety University will be held Tuesday, Oct. 24 at Ankeny Fire station #1, 120 NW Ash Drive. The workshop will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and include lunch.

Session topics will be announced soon, and an email will be sent to the safety contact at each member to notify them of when online registration has started for this free event.

Final payroll audits for FY16-17 policy period

The final payroll audits for the 2016-2017 are in full swing. Each year IMWCA contracts with Information Providers Incorporated (IPI) to perform the final payroll audit. These are completed in July, August and early September. At this point, your audit should either be completed, scheduled, or will be scheduled by September 1. Complying with the audit is a requirement of coverage, as stated in your coverage memorandum.

The purpose of the final payroll audit is to adjust your workers' compensation premium to the appropriate amount. If you have overpaid, you receive a refund; if you underpaid you receive a balance bill.

As workers' compensation premium is based on payroll, the final payroll numbers for the recently completed fiscal year are reviewed. For tips on preparing for your audit please visit www.imwca.org > Underwriting > Audits.

When to test for physical fitness

There are many tests to determine if employees are able to perform their job: the pre-employment exam, post-offer exam, functional capacity exam/evaluation (FCE), and fitness for duty exam, in addition to variations of each. It is incorrect to assume these are all the same and can be completed at any time.

Pre-employment exams that are allowed during the application process include physical fitness and physical agility tests if they relate to job duties. Employers cannot require an exam or seek out medical information about an applicant.

Post-offer exams are usually very comprehensive; often times they include a medical exam. A good post-offer exam should provide a baseline on the employee to compare against a potential future exam post-injury. When having an individual complete a post-offer exam it is essential that it is done in compliance with applicable employment laws, such as The Americans with Disabilities Act. These include:

- A conditional offer of employment has been extended to the applicant
- All employees in the same job classification/position are required to have the same physical exam
- Keep all medical results confidential and separate from the personnel file
- Employers can't discriminate against the individual due to their exam results, and should work with individuals to see if an accommodation is reasonable
- No inquiry of family medical history should be made in accordance with the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act of 2008

The FCE can be used as a portion of the post-offer exam or on its own as a post-injury assessment. The FCE is typically a thorough evaluation that looks at the health status as well as the functionality of the body to perform the job.

The fitness for duty exam, in contrast, usually focuses only on the portion of the body that is injured as it relates to specific job tasks. It too is a good tool to assess post-injury ability to perform the job.

When requesting a FCE or fitness for duty exam, ensure the provider performing the exam has a job description and a thorough understanding of the essential duties. In addition, an employer can only request a FCE or fitness for duty exam if:

- It is job-related and consistent with business necessity
- There are concerns that the employee is unable to perform essential job functions, typically observed or volunteered by the employee
- When the employee has been out of work for a longer period of time for an illness/injury. The exception to this is when an employee uses the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) the 12-weeks must be exhausted
- After a worker's compensation case if required by a provider and unless the FMLA exception applies

As always, check with your attorney to ensure your policies and practices are in compliance with employment laws.



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