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# The Informer

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

## Starting a safety committee

The benefits of a successful, functioning safety committee are many, but no two safety committees are exactly alike. These differences leave many organizations wondering how to get started.

It should also be noted that safety committees aren't necessary in very small organizations. Generally, more than four individuals are needed to begin a safety committee, because the committee is a meeting of various departments within the organization.

The overall purpose of a safety committee is getting the organization's department together to make decisions which drive the safety aspect of the organization and to keep up to date on safety concerns.

This includes discussing:

- Safety concerns or hazards in each department
- Training that has worked
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) that may work in various departments
- Programs and procedures that need to be updated

Members of the safety committee are recognized for safety consciousness within their departments and overall safe work ethic. The members of the committee should be a diverse mix of supervisors and non-supervisors.

A chairperson leads the committee and is responsible for setting the agendas, meeting dates and times. The chairperson also notifies committee members of incident review meetings

and follow-up items.

Common safety committee agenda items include:

- Attendance
- Review incidents/injuries
- Unfinished or follow-up business from the previous meeting
- Conduct safety inspections or self-audits
- Outside presenter or training

At each meeting it is important that a member of the committee documents the committee's progress by taking meeting minutes. The meeting minutes help the committee monitor their process and follow-up items.

Most IMWCA members with productive safety committees are continuously making improvements to ensure their safety committee best fits their organization's needs at the time.

IMWCA loss control representatives can help you get started as you set-up a committee, and can provide ideas for improving already established committees. In addition model programs, available at [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org) may be of assistance.



Check out this video, *Safety Procedures Done Better*, to assist in your safety committee planning.

# NCCI rates for FY 2021

The Iowa Insurance Commissioner approved the rate filing proposed by the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI), the rate setting organization for Iowa and 37 other states, to be effective July 1, 2020. The approved filing calls for an average 3.67% overall rate decrease for municipal codes used by IMWCA members. The new rates are posted on our website; click *Rates* under Quicklinks. This allows members to calculate the premium based on projected payroll in each class code.

The IMWCA Board of Trustees will meet January 23, 2020 to review the Discount Rating Plan and Good Experience Bonus Program.

# Correction to FY 2020 rates

NCCI determined that the January 1, 2019 Iowa rate filing applied an incorrect expense factor in the premium calculation which impacted the overall average rate level indication. On August 20, 2019, NCCI filed a revised rate filing to reflect the application of the correct expense factor. The revised filing, decreased the rates an additional 2.3% from the original. IMWCA will be applying the revised rates to member policies during the 2019-2020 audit period. For questions regarding NCCI rating, please contact Andrew Justice, underwriting analyst, at (515)-974-5341 or [andrewjustice@iowaleague.org](mailto:andrewjustice@iowaleague.org).

## **WISH** Walking in a winter wonderland Workplace Initiative for Safety & Health

Slips, trips and falls are the leading cause of claims within IMWCA. Although these are year-round, the incidents and severity increase in the wintertime. There are many ways to combat the unsteady feeling we all get trying to maneuver on a slick surface. Whether it is snow, ice or combination, it is officially time to make your adjustments. A good, winter walking technique is to “walk like a penguin.”

Here is how:

- Point your feet out.
- Keep your neck straight.
- Go slowly.
- Take short steps or shuffle for stability.
- Extend your arms out to your sides.
- Bend slightly, walking flat-footed with your center of gravity directly over your feet.

In conjunction with this new walk, a few other adjustments can keep you on your feet. For those of you who wear formal footwear to work, we suggest wearing those warm and safer rubber-soled flat-bottomed boots into the office, pack the dress shoes in a bag, and then change to your dress shoes in the office. This gives you extra traction and leaves you flat footed. Your center of gravity stays constant in a sturdy sole versus a shoe with a heel.

Those who work outside or outdoors in winter weather, check into getting traction aids. These allow you to have better grip and traction on slick surfaces. If you are out in the winter, keep these points in mind:

- Anticipate ice even if you cannot see it; it could be under the wet surface.
- Keep your hands free. This improves your balance decreasing the chance of falling. If you do begin to fall you can use your arms and hands to guide yourself in an effort to decrease impact and reduce injury from the fall.
- Take slow, short steps, it isn't a race, walk with purpose and each step deliberate. If there is a railing or any other sturdy fixture, use it for added stability.

Whether at work or at home, a few simple, purposeful steps can help you enjoy the winter wonderland safely.



## New minimum salary for exempt employees

Hopefully, this article serves as a reminder more than an introduction, as the development of this rule is more than five years in the making. If this is new information, here is a little background for you. In 2014, President Barack Obama wanted to update the overtime regulations within the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

The Department of Labor (DOL) researched the topic and welcomed comments from the public. In 2016, the DOL issued a final rule, raising the existing minimum salary threshold from \$23,660 per year (\$455 per week) to \$47,476 per year (\$913 per week).

Due to major objections from employers coast to coast, the proposed rule stalled and was ultimately struck down in a court ruling. Fast forward to September 2019; the DOL came out with the new final rule that will go in effect January 1.

The new minimum salary threshold will be \$35,568 per year (\$684 per week). As of January 1, 2020, if you have any employees that are exempt from overtime, they will need to make at least a minimum of \$684 per week. If you have exempt employees that are paid less than this new minimum threshold, there are two options:

- Increase the employee's salary to the new minimum or higher.
- Change the employee to non-exempt status and start paying them overtime (compensatory time, if applicable)

It is important to remember that even if your employees make equal or more than the minimum salary threshold, you cannot automatically make them exempt. They still need to pass the relevant duties test to ensure that the job duties they perform qualify them to be classified as an exempt employee. The three tests that are most pertinent to public employers are:

### Executive employee exemption requires:

- Management of the enterprise or department.
- Direct supervision of two full-time employees or the equivalent.
- Ability to hire, fire or ability to make recommendations that carry significant weight.

### Professional employee exemption requires:

- Performance of work requiring advanced knowledge.
- Performance of work in a field of science or learning.
- Knowledge acquired by a prolonged course of intellectual study.

### Administrative employee exemption requires:

- Primary duty involves office or non-manual labor.
- Exercise discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.

For additional information, reach out to IMWCA's human resource specialist, the Department of Labor or your city or employment attorney.

IMWCA Informer is a monthly newsletter published by the Iowa Municipalities Workers' Compensation Association (IMWCA) in cooperation with the Iowa League of Cities. View past issues online at [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org).

Comments or suggestions: Contact IMWCA at (515) 244-7282 or [imwcainfo@iowaleague.org](mailto:imwcainfo@iowaleague.org).

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## Happy Holidays

As the holidays approach we want to say, "Thank you!" to each member for your loyalty and commitment to our shared goal of sending everyone home safe at the end of each day. Our office will be closed December 24-25 and January 1, so staff can celebrate the holidays with family and friends. Claims should still be reported immediately through Company Nurse during this time. Thank you!

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