

IN THIS ISSUE:

Page

- 2 Claims Corner: Horseplay
- 2 Payroll Worksheets available online
- 2 Discounts and bonuses
- 3 Working with seasonal employees
- 4 National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week poster

The Informer

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

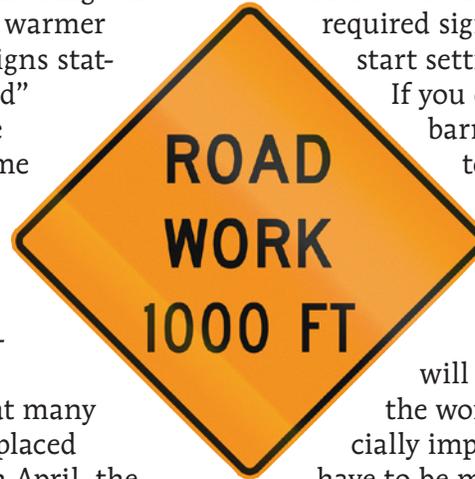
Work zone safety: Don't get hit

The month of March brings the promise of spring, warmer weather and orange signs stating "Road Work Ahead" popping up across the landscape. It is the time of the year that road construction and other public works projects start to impact our streets, highways and interstates.

This also means that many public employees are placed into harms' way. Each April, the National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week is held to put focus on the dangers that workers encounter. This year the week of April 3-7 has been declared as the week to raise awareness. Printable copies of the 2017 Work Zone Safety Posters can be found at the end of this issue.

As a municipal worker, what can you do to protect yourself when carrying out tasks in work zones?

Ensure you and your co-workers have a well-thought-out plan as to how you will set up your work zone. What type of work and equipment will be involved? What are the traffic patterns in proximity to the work area? What is the speed limit? Will traffic have to be stopped or detoured? Will the work zone remain set up during nighttime hours? What will be the signage and barricading requirements? All of these questions must be considered before any activity can take place.



Make sure that you have all of the required signage available before you start setting up the work zone.

If you do not have enough barricades, signs or cones to properly identify the work zone – do not start the project. Just "making do" can result in a tragedy.

Review how workers will communicate around the work zone. This is especially important when traffic will have to be managed or stopped. If the team is not all on the same page someone may get hurt.

Above all, let vigilance be your watch word. Pay attention that you remain within the dedicated work zone. Do not forget where you are and accidentally step into traffic. Maintain your awareness of the activity around you, especially that which is outside your work zone. Be prepared to act or move quickly to get out of the way of a vehicle that enters the work zone.

Plan ahead. Be prepared. Stay alert. Stay alive.

What can you do as an average person to help improve work zone safety?

As either a driver or pedestrian it is always recommended that you remain aware of your surroundings. Keep your eyes open for situations that are not normal or routine. This includes work zones that may encroach on your travel path. Look for "Road Work Ahead" and

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

“Flagger Ahead” signage, flashing lights on barricades and workers wearing high visibility clothing. These are obvious signs that you are approaching a work zone.

Stay alert for the less obvious clues, too. Some work zones are not properly signed or barricaded. In these cases, there may be other indicators to slow down and pay

attention. Perhaps a line of dump trucks? An end loader or back hoe backing into the roadway ahead? Clusters of workers on the side of a road or street? Practice defensive driving, and always be prepared to slow down, stop or change directions in a safe manner to avoid hitting someone in a work zone.

CLAIMS CORNER: Matt Jackson, Claims Manager

Horseplay

Horseplay is sometimes a friendly, physical way to let off steam. But horseplay at work becomes no laughing matter when someone gets injured as a result. When an employee initiates or actively participates in horseplay any injury that he or she receives will not be compensable. An employee takes themselves out of the scope and course of their employment when they participate in horseplay activities.

Horseplay creates unnecessary risks and dangerous situations. Running and chasing can cause slips, trips and falls as well as other accidents. When an employee is fooling around, he or she is not concentrating on their work. If an employee is not fully concentrating, he or she is less likely to notice a hazard until it is too late. Consider how bad you or one of your employees would feel if the horseplay injured someone. If you injured yourself as a result of horseplay, you would feel pretty foolish.

Many of the claims received involving horseplay come from seasonal employees or summer help. Pool employees seem to have a large share of the horseplay claims IMWCA receives.

Horseplay claims are easily prevented, but employees have to know that horseplay will not be tolerated and there will be consequences if they are “fooling around.” Communicating this up front and having strong supervision is key to preventing claims involving horseplay.



Payroll Worksheets available online

IMWCA's payroll renewal worksheet for the upcoming 2017-2018 policy renewal is now available online. A paper copy was also mailed in mid-February. The mailing contained information regarding the online access. Please review your worksheet either in paper or online, and indicate any payroll that differs from our estimate. The deadline to return the worksheet is March 24, so we can record your adjustments and calculate an accurate estimate of your renewal premium. Final Estimated Premium Schedules, Information Pages, and Invoices will be mailed in May.

Contact us at (800) 257-2708 or imwcainfo@iowaleague.org if you have not yet received your payroll worksheet or with any questions.



A video about the renewal process is available on IMWCA's YouTube Channel.

Discounts and bonuses

On January 26, the IMWCA Board of Trustees met and reviewed the Discount Rating Plan and the Good Experience Bonus Program for Fiscal Year 2017. Consideration was given to the actuarial evaluation, the 4.7 percent rate decrease recommended by NCCI and approved by the Iowa Insurance Commissioner, and the fund balance of the IMWCA.

The Board elected to increase the overall average discount in the Discount Rating Plan to 35 percent for FY 2018. The Good Experience Bonus Program was also increased with credits ranging from 8 to 20 percent. These additional credits are applied for members with experience modification factors of .95 or less, stair-stepping up to the maximum discount for an experience modification factor of .74 or less. The increase in the Discount Rating Plan benefits all IMWCA members, while maintaining the credits in the Good Experience Bonus continues to reward the best performance.

Working with seasonal employees

Even though it may not seem like it, summer is just around the corner. Have you started to think about seasonal help?

The ability to recruit seasonal staff varies depending on employer size, location and availability of employable candidates. Who do you know? Consider last year's seasonal employees and the recommendations of current employees. Focus on attitude over aptitude, and train for success.

It is a misconception that seasonal employees do not need the same information as regular employees. Hire seasonal employees similarly; be sure that they have a job description and fill out an application, W-4 and I-9 forms. Some basic employment laws that cover seasonal employees include the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which relates to minimum wage, overtime and child labor. Employers with 15 or more employees should consider Title VII Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disability Act as well as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission which oversees discrimination and equal pay. Employers with more than 50 employees should also pay attention to Affordable Care Act (ACA). You must be able to determine if your employee is a 'seasonal worker' or 'seasonal employee' as defined by ACA, for additional information see www.irs.gov/affordable-care-act/employers/aca-and-employers-how-seasonal-workers-affect-your-ale-status.

If you hire teens, pay extra attention to Iowa Child Labor Law and OSHA young worker rights. These laws protect minors by regulating what type of jobs, number of hours and how late they can work. Restrictions are based on the minor's age. The Iowa Child Labor Law also requires that any minor 14 or 15 years old need a work permit (for most jobs). See www.iowadivisionoflabor.gov/child-labor and www.osha.gov/youngworkers/employers.html for more detailed information.

Once you find your seasonal staff and are in line with employment laws you may want to sigh with relief, but don't think your role is done. Train, Train, Train. According to Safety and Health Magazine, employees who are in the first month of their job are three times more likely to have a lost-time injury than employees who have worked a year or longer. Ensure the seasonal employees know what is expected of them. Review the employee handbook and safety manual. Provide hands-on training for the equipment they will be using.

As you establish what training you are going to provide, remember one of the most important expectations you can provide to the seasonal employee is: when in doubt ask. Then make sure you and your staff uphold the responsibility to listen, answer and mentor. Only then will a true culture of safety prevail.

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.

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

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