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# The Informer

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

## Winter's Swan Song- Stay Alert to Prevent Falls

At this point, we are all becoming somewhat fatigued by another Iowa winter. We are looking forward to warmer weather and longer days. However, now more than ever, we need to remain focused on winter hazards.

This is also a time when IMWCA typically can see an increase in slips and falls due to snow and ice conditions. Why does this occur when we are at the end of the winter season? Here are a couple of things to consider:

- Seasonal complacency. At this point, we often let down our guard and become less cautious about walking on snow and ice. After all, nothing has happened to us throughout winter - why would something occur now? And, just perhaps, we are all a little over-confident about our penguin walking skills.
- End of season "re-freezing." This time of year, we typically have accumulated stockpiles of snow around sidewalks and parking lots that start to melt during the day. This melting will often re-freeze overnight. This creates morning walking hazards.
- Late Winter/Early Spring Storms: It is not uncommon to have snow and ice storms in March and even April in Iowa.

### Stay Alert. Stay Focused. Stay Safe.

Here are some tips to make it through the rest of the season without a painful slip, trip, or fall:

- Know the weather forecast. Recognize that temperatures can swing widely from one day to the next.

- Wear appropriate footwear. Continue to keep your snow boots or shoes with soles appropriate for winter walking. Keep slip-on traction aides close by and use them whenever the weather and conditions warrant. Now is not the time to put our winter gear away.



- Continue to walk like a penguin. Keep your arms extended for balance and keep your center of balance directly over your feet. Shuffle along while keeping your feet spread a bit apart and flat on the walking surface.
- Keep salt and sand handy to address slick spots on sidewalks, steps and even parking lots. Many workplaces now provide a container of salt and sand inside their building entrances
- Remember that work is only one place to pay attention and that the end of winter hazards apply to everywhere in Iowa.

### Should you fall, Call Company Nurse!

Even with practicing all the above, should the fickle finger of fate pick you to have a fall while at work, do not just

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jump right back up. Take your time to determine if you have injured yourself. Getting up too quickly can often aggravate an injury before you are even aware you are hurt.

Whether you are injured or not, tell your supervisor what happened and call the IMWCA Company Nurse toll-free number or use the app. The Company Nurse

system can help you determine if you need to seek medical attention. Remember that injuries from winter falls can often take a couple of days to become apparent.

## CLAIMS CORNER:

Matt Jackson, Claims Manager

# Increase of slip, trip and fall claims

Many of your employees spend time out in the elements as part of their jobs. Ice and snow is a hazard we all have to deal with, even if it is just walking from your vehicle into an office. Slip, trip, and fall claims can occur anytime throughout the year even in ideal conditions. Claims involving slips, trips, and falls are trending upward.

In calendar year 2017, we received a total of 194 slip, trip, and fall claims and five of these claims are still open. The 20 costliest of these claims ranged from \$29,500 up to \$251,622 total incurred. As with many workers' compensation claims, slip, trip, and fall claims tend to have a "long tail," meaning that payment can extend over many years after the original accident. IMWCA must maintain reserves to cover the expected costs until the claim is closed.

In 2018, we received a total of 227 slip, trip, and fall claims and 10 of these are still open. The 20 costliest of these claims ranged from \$30,000 to \$253,112 total incurred.

In 2019, there were 248 total slip, trip, and fall claims reported with 66 of these claims still open and active. The costs of the top 20 claims ranged from \$65,000 to \$175,000 total incurred.

In 2020, we have received 46 slip, trip, and fall claims through the beginning of February. The estimated costs of the top 20 of these claims range from \$3,000 to \$119,500 total incurred. Many of the 2020 claims have yet to develop and even a few of the 2019 claims are still developing which means IMWCA does not know the total severity of the injury and what medical treatment may be needed.

The 2020 claims have come from departments with frequent exposure to winter elements, such as building maintenance, law enforcement and public works/secondary roads. IMWCA has received many claims from employees that work in the library or have clerical/office positions. Visit our website [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org), under the Loss Control, Model Programs is a Slip, Trip, and Fall Handbook that all our members should utilize.

## Regional Workshops

IMWCA will host four regional workshops that will cover why Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspects local governments and what to do if you are selected for an inspection.

The workshops will run from 10 a.m. to noon. The workshops will discuss the three main ways that local governments are identified for inspection and how to minimize your chances of making that list. IMWCA staff will also cover how an inspection will be conducted, some do's and don'ts and how you will need to respond to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The four locations are:

- March 17 - Cherokee
- March 19 - Corning
- March 24 - Washington
- March 26 - Independence

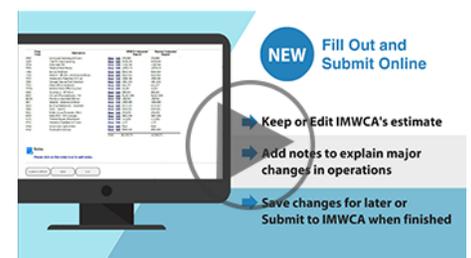
Register online!

## Payroll worksheets due March 27

The deadline to return your payroll worksheet for the 2020-2021 policy renewal is March 27. You are able to complete it electronically by logging into your Member Login at [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org) or return the paper copy you received in the mail. Please review your worksheet, and indicate any payroll that differs from our estimate. IMWCA will record your adjustments and calculate an estimate of your renewal premium. Worksheets should be returned by the March 27 deadline even if no adjustments to the IMWCA estimates are made.

The Estimated Premium Schedule and invoice are generated using the payroll received from each member. Final Estimated Premium Schedules, Information Pages, Experience Modification Worksheets, and invoices will be mailed in May.

Contact us at (800) 257-2708 or [imwcainfo@iowaleague.org](mailto:imwcainfo@iowaleague.org).



## Same hiring process for seasonal employees

**B**rrrr.... as you pull your stocking hat down and wrap your scarf tighter in your attempt to stay warm during these remaining winter days, put a smile on your face and focus on the warmth that is just around the corner.

It may not seem too close, but the time is here to start thinking about hiring seasonal employees. Don't forget that hiring seasonal employees is the same process as hiring full-time and part-time regular employees.

If your seasonal employees are potentially minors, be sure to look at Iowa Child Labor Law and Occupational Safety and Health Administration young worker rights. These laws protect minors by regulating the type of jobs, the number of hours and how late they are allowed to work.

Restrictions are based on the minor's age. Examining the rules associated with minors will help ensure that you only hire minors for the types of positions that have been approved to keep them as safe as possible.

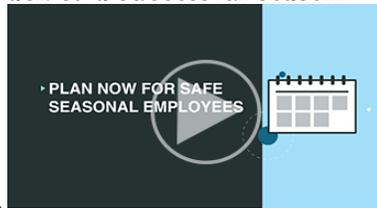
See <http://www.iowadivisionoflabor.gov/child-labor> and <https://www.osha.gov/youngworkers/employers.html> for

more detailed information.

You may not be convinced that regular employees and seasonal employees are essentially the same, as it is obvious that seasonal employees work considerably less hours in a given year. However, it is imperative to realize your responsibility as the employer. You must follow the same employment laws when hiring, managing and terminating seasonal employees as you do with regular employees. It is common for seasonal employees to be terminated at the end of the season and rehired at the start of the season next year.

Do not make a mistake in thinking when you rehire former employees that you do not need to do a new physical or orientation. Many aspects can change for the rehired employee and the employer during the offseason months.

If you follow these tips you will be on the right track to a successful season with engaged and properly trained seasonal employees.



## When OSHA comes calling...

There is certain training that requires documentation and retention by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In this two-part series, we discuss some of the items they will require. When OSHA comes to your entity, they request the training records for:

- PPE- Personal Protective Equipment
- Hazardous Waste Operations
- Process Safety Management
- Respiratory Protection
- Powered Industrial Trucks
- LOTO-Lockout Tagout
- Confined Space Entry

The documentation of training for employees should be a top priority for your organization. This allows you to have current records available if OSHA would stop. IMWCA recommends that you use or set up a training tracker to keep track of what training an employee or employees have done. Using a training tracker can also assist in the evaluation of the safety culture. IMWCA has a model tracker that assists in record keeping of safety training located in our model programs on the website. The next part in the series will discuss the importance of record custodian and their designated training files.

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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