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IN THIS ISSUE:

Page

- 2 WISH: Flu shots, please!
- 2 Cover your Multiphase Turbulent Buoyant Cloud
- 2 Waitlist started for the One-Day Safety University
- 3 Organizational charts have value
- 3 Iowa LTAP Excavation Safety Workshops

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The Informer

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

Firefighters: The Next Generation

Your IMWCA loss control team works with more than 280 volunteer and combination fire departments across Iowa. The trends are obvious: fire department volunteers are aging and their ranks are dwindling. Conversely, the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) reports that call volume to fire departments has tripled since 1980. While we support the NVFC and Explorer junior firefighter models, we continue to see departments strapped for resources and unable to implement these programs the way they are intended.

Le Mars Fire Chief David Schipper told us about a unique junior firefighter program the city of Denison developed and IMWCA inquired to see how it works. The results are exemplary and IMWCA and the League have been working to replicate this program across the state.

Denison Fire Chief Cory Snowgren collaborated with the Denison School District and Western Iowa Tech Community College to create a program that might be the best model ever. Fire science is offered as an elective course to junior and senior high school students, offering students both high school and college credit. At the end of the course and upon reaching eighteen years of age, students are allowed to test to become Firefighter I and Firefighter II certified. These graduates are ready to serve on the Denison or surrounding community's fire departments, and have a head-start on a career, should they choose the fire service.

IMWCA and the League have been busy working to replicate Denison's model. A series of meetings and phone calls to fire departments in the central Iowa area confirmed the need for both volunteer firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians. More work with Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) confirmed the college was interested in working with area high schools. This led to a meeting with representatives from DMACC, Southeast Polk High School and the fire departments from Altoona, Pleasant Hill and Mitchellville. The result is a new Career Academy at DMACC, offering Fire Science and Emergency Medical Technician courses at the Ankeny campus. The program is offered to Southeast Polk and five other area school districts, with students enrolled for the fall semester Fire Science course and the spring EMT course.

IMWCA and the League are currently working with the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau to spread this model across the state. Taking advantage of high school/community college fire science and EMT courses will introduce these life skills to high school juniors and seniors and build a pool of young, well-trained volunteers for the communities we serve. Utilizing existing education providers takes a training load off of departments where resources are already stretched. Questions about setting up a similar program with your area community college? Contact Mickey Shields at mickeyshields@iowaleague.org.

Flu shots, please!

October signals the beginning of lots of seasonal activities. It's also the beginning of the flu season. Consider adding a flu shot to your October "must-do" list this month, as flu activity traditionally begins to increase this month.



Each year, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issues a Frequently Asked Questions article to help everyone prepare for the upcoming flu season. In the "What's new this flu season" list, the CDC notes the 2017-2018 vaccine "has been updated to better match the circulating flu viruses." The CDC also renewed its recommendation to get an injectable flu vaccine instead of the nasal spray vaccine. This is due to concerns for the nasal vaccine's effectiveness against the H1N1 variants of the flu virus. As always, consult with your medical professional about the appropriate flu vaccine for you.

While the CDC lists getting a flu shot as the number one way to prevent the flu, they also recommend these good health habits:

- Avoid close contact with others that are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing.
- Clean your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season-2017-2018.htm>

Cover your Multiphase Turbulent Buoyant Cloud

According to a 2014 Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) study, a multiphase turbulent buoyant cloud is made when we cough or sneeze, allowing micro-droplets to mix with the ambient air and travel much further than previously thought – 200 times further! Keep those tissues handy. The people on the other side of the gymnasium will thank you. Dig into the fluid dynamics details at <http://news.mit.edu/2014/coughs-and-sneezes-float-farther-you-think>.

Not up for an MIT journal article? Try the Slate.com approach - a humorous, yet gross, video about the study. Don't say we didn't warn you: http://www.slate.com/articles/video/video/2014/04/mit_sneeze_study_new_research_shows_sneezes_can_travel_up_to_200_feet.html

Waitlist started for the One Day Safety University

The One Day Safety University is currently at capacity, but we have a waitlist if you can handle a last-minute notice. Add yourself the waitlist on the IMWCA web site.

The workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 24 at the Ankeny Fire Station #1. Registration will begin at 8:30 with the program starting at 9 a.m. The event, which includes lunch, will conclude by 4 p.m.

This free training is designed for new safety coordinators, experienced coordinators looking for new ideas, safety committee chairs or anyone involved with safety that would like to network with others involved in safety.

Back by popular demand is the Convincer. The seatbelt simulator will be available to try during lunch and after the last session.

Already registered, but can't make it? Let us know at losscontrol@iowaleague.org so we can alert someone waiting to attend.

Event Address:
Ankeny Fire Station #1
120 NW Ash Drive
Ankeny, IA 50023

Organizational charts have value

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, an organizational chart – often shortened to org chart – is “a chart that shows how all of the jobs in a large company relate to each other.” Looking at this simple definition, one might wonder why all the fuss? Why do we need an org chart, especially being a small entity?

No matter the size of employer, an org chart is an essential tool. It gives a visual representation of the organizational structure. A well-defined organizational structure outlines the chain of command at the entity and suggests the way information should flow. For employees to be successful in their employment, it is essential for them to understand the chain of command and to whom they report. The Gallup Q¹² research continues to show that the most engaged employees are the ones who have the tools and knowledge to do their job and know what is expected of them every day. An updated org chart ensures that employees as well as citizens have clarity on management authority.

The structure of municipal entities can sometimes cause confusion for employees. Do they report to the governing body that meets monthly or bimonthly or to the officials who



are in the office every day? Due to availability and accessibility, issues often flow directly to the municipal employee. This can become a source of frustration to these employees, as they may not have the authority to make decisions to address issues in a timely manner.

The big thing to remember is that decisions can't be made without authority and you can't have authority without being defined by state statute or local designation. There are a number of ways local governments can be structured in Iowa. Having a well-defined organizational structure with an updated org chart can alleviate confusion and provide greater satisfaction to employees and citizens.

Iowa LTAP Excavation Safety Workshops

The Iowa Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) is offering an Excavation Safety Workshop in four locations in October. Registration must be made by October 13. The cost is \$125.

The workshop focuses on the hazards of excavation and trenching, how accidents can happen and the application of worker safety measures.

Locations:

- Storm Lake, October 23
- Tripoli, October 24
- Sigourney, October 25
- Atlantic, October 26

Learn more and register at:
<http://www.intrans.iastate.edu/events/excavation-safety/>

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

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