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# The Informer

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

## When the weather outside is frightful

On April 8, 1973, one of the worst blizzards in Iowa history blew across the state. Snow accumulations of 12 to 19 inches were recorded with drifts up to 15 feet blocking many roads. The blizzard lasted three days; plows were stuck and people were stranded in their vehicles. Now is the time to consider what to keep on hand should you end up stranded in a blizzard. Here is a list to help you get started:

- Ice scraper with snow brush.
- Jumper cables. Be sure you know how to use them to avoid exploding a battery or frying the many electrical components on today's vehicles.
- Sand or cat litter-for tire traction.
- Multi-Tool. Big or small a tool like this is bound to come in handy.
- First-aid kit. This can be small but practical; keep your specific needs in mind, including medications.
- Flashlight. LED flashlights are compact yet powerful; be sure to have extra batteries.
- Rags or shop towels. These have multiple uses, even a roll of heavy paper towels is good.
- Gloves that are water/snow repellent.
- Duct tape. You can fix nearly anything with duct tape.
- Rain poncho. Get an inexpensive one. It can be used for rain, snow and even as an extra layer to keep you warm
- Emergency blanket/sleeping bag.
- Extra clothing like a stocking cap, boots, socks, a hooded sweat shirt.
- Folding shovel. A military style entrenching tool is compact and can dig ice and snow.
- Water or energy drinks in bottles.
- High calorie non-perishable food like protein bars, nuts, dried fruit, etc.
- Cell phone-fully charged. Today's smart phones have apps for everything, including GPS, maps, flashlights and more. Be sure to have the right charger with you!
- Water proof matches. A lighter is great until it does not work, so matches are a better choice.
- Candles to provide light, heat and melt snow for water.
- Old coffee can or other metal container to melt snow.
- Rope to tie yourself to the vehicle if you step outside so you can find your way back in a blizzard.



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- Fire extinguisher.
- Large plastic garbage bags. These have multiple uses such as extra warmth, keeping feet dry, etc.
- Tow rope or strap. A passing vehicle may be able to assist.
- Whistle to attract attention.
- Flares or reflectors. Flares work well to attract attention but will burn out; reflectors can be lost in a blizzard, so consider having both options available.



There are numerous sources for preassembled winter survival kits, and many other sources of information on what to place in your vehicle in case of emergency. The list here is lengthy, but not all-inclusive. Start with the list, then add and subtract items based on your specific needs, travel plans and available room in your vehicle. In addition, make sure you are familiar with the emergency roadside kit kept in the vehicle you are using—at home or at work. And of course, make sure your vehicle is ready for winter. To learn more and view a Prepare for Survival video by the Iowa Department of Transportation visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYRHQcOSW3U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYRHQcOSW3U).

Don't forget to buckle up!



## Extension cord, power strip safety

Source: OSHA

As the temperature drops and the holiday season approaches, the use of extension cords, surge protectors and power strips increases. We use extension cords for a wide variety of things during winter. Space heaters, holiday lights, crock pots for pot luck lunches – the list goes on.

Below are some basic safety tips to keep you, your home and your workplace safe as you use extension cords and power strips. Failure to use these electrical devices in a safe manner creates hazards that can cause significant personal injury or fire. Remember, wherever electricity is present the risk of heat and electrical shock is also present.

### Don't:

- Do not use extension cords as a “permanent” wiring solution.
- Do not use damaged cords, surge protectors or power strips.
- Do not plug one extension cord into another (piggy backing or daisy chaining). If extra length is required, purchase a longer extension cord. The same goes for surge protectors and power strips.
- Do not run extension cords through doorways or windows.
- Do not use an adaptor to plug a three-prong plug into a two-prong outlet.

### Do:

- Always inspect an extension cord, surge protector and power strip before each use to ensure the insulating cover, plug and prong are in proper condition.
- Only use cords, surge protectors and power strips that are labeled as approved by a laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL), and which are equipped with a three-prong plug.
- Use extension cords for only temporary uses. Unplug when not in use.
- Use power strips only for their intended use and make sure to not exceed the rated power rating of the strip.
- Ensure the cord plug fits securely into the outlet. If the connection is loose, have an electrician replace the outlet.
- Use a GFCI outlet for outside or wet indoor situations.



# NCCI rates, Discount Rating Plan for FY17

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, 2016. The approved filing calls for an average 2.3 percent overall rate increase for municipal codes used by IMWCA members. The new rates are posted on our Web site at [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org), and can be accessed by clicking on "Rates" under Quicklinks, then "NCCI Rates." This allows you to calculate manual premium based on your projected payroll in each class code.

The IMWCA Board of Trustees will meet on January 28 and review the Discount Rating Plan and Good Experience Bonus Program.

# Workshop dates online

IMWCA just set the dates and locations of both the Solid Waste Workshop and the Regional Workshop series. Check the calendar section of [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org) for dates, registration information and training topics.

We hope to see you at one of these events around the state!

# Annual Report available

Audited financial information for IMWCA, including the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report as of June 30, 2015, is available online. Visit [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org), then choose "Financials" in the "About IMWCA" tab.

**Have a happy, and safe, holiday!**

**Our office will be closed December 24-25 and December 31-January 1.**

**Claims should still be reported immediately through Company Nurse during this time.**



IMWCA Informer is a monthly newsletter published by the Iowa Municipalities Workers' Compensation Association (IMWCA) in cooperation with the Iowa League of Cities.

This newsletter is designed to educate local officials on workers' compensation issues. Suggestions for articles or topics to appear in IMWCA Informer are always welcome. Contact IMWCA at (515) 244-7282. You may also view this publication online at [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org).

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