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Comments or suggestions, call
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The Informer

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

National Safety Month: What I Live For

Each June the National Safety Council (NSC) celebrates National Safety Month, a time to bring attention to important safety issues. NSC partners with thousands of organizations across the country to raise awareness of what it takes to stay safe. The 2015 theme is "What I Live For". This year the NSC is focusing on the important topics of prescription painkiller abuse, transportation safety, ergonomics, emergency preparedness, and slips, trips and falls.

Prescription Painkiller Abuse

According to the NSC, drug overdoses, largely from opioid prescription painkillers, are the leading cause of unintentional death for adults ages 25-64. Every day 44 people die from prescription painkiller overdose.

Transportation Safety

More than 35,000 people are killed each year in traffic crashes, with alcohol, speeding and distraction being the leading crash factors. Turn off your cell phone, get plenty of sleep and don't drink and drive. At IMWCA motor vehicle crashes account for some of the most severe injuries to member employees. ALWAYS buckle-up, no matter how short the trip, no matter the type of vehicle. If it has a seatbelt, it was put there to protect the operator; use it.

Ergonomics

About 80 percent of the American population will experience a back problem at some point. These injuries are not only preventable, they're

also costly. Americans spend at least \$50 billion each year on back pain. Staying healthy and active are two big ways you can prevent low back pain. Use a piece of equipment such as a cart or two-wheel dolly, and get help when lifting and moving heavy or bulky objects.

Emergency Preparedness

Municipal employees are very familiar with the damage natural disasters may cause. For example, it only takes a few inches of water from a flood to cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage. IMWCA member employees are at the forefront of emergency preparedness.

Slip, Trip and Fall

At IMWCA slip, trip and fall incidents are a leading cause of injury to member employees. When measured by severity and cost of claim, slip, trip and fall injuries placed in the top two last fiscal year. These injuries are almost always preventable. Be sure to wear proper footwear for the job, pay special attention to weather conditions, and don't forget the three points of contact when climbing on ladders or in and out of equipment.

Everyone has something or someone to live for. Here at IMWCA we are passionate about protecting the people who protect us. Join IMWCA and the National Safety Council to make every day safe, so you have the opportunity to return home, safely, to your loved ones at the end of your day. Learn more about National Safety month at www.nsc.org/act/events/Pages/national-safety-month.aspx?var=homepage3.



Hearing protection when mowing

The mowing season is in full swing for 2015, and it's time to talk about hearing protection for staff who mow.

The first thing to consider is the amount of noise the employees are exposed to while mowing. The best way to gauge this exposure is to measure the decibel level of the mower and other equipment used. If the employee is subjected to 85 decibels or more, they must wear approved and rated hearing protection. There are exceptions to this rule based on time-weighted noise average exposure, however, given the complexity and costs to comply with the exception, it is better to just require that hearing protection will be used. When doing noise checks be sure to document the noise level for each mower or piece of equipment.

Once a noise level has been determined, appropriate hearing protection can be obtained. For noise in the 86 to 90 decibel range, typical foam earplugs with a 17-decibel reduction will work. Higher noise levels will require hearing protection equipment with a higher rated reduction, like earmuffs or a combination of plugs and muffs. The Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) should be labeled on the packaging or box.

In addition to noting the NRR, be sure to provide your employees with a choice of hearing protection to ensure comfort and fit. It is also important to train employees on the proper way to don the

earplugs, since foam and rubber plugs require different insertion methods.

We are sometimes asked if employee-owned ear buds and headphone sets are allowed as hearing protection. According to the Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Iowa OSHA), based on an interpretation done several years ago, the answer is no--unless you can show that the buds and headset are rated for noise reduction and the volume of the music doesn't exceed 85 decibels.

There are a few models of Beats, Bose and Infinity headsets that are noise cancelling and volume controlled which would qualify, but they are very expensive. To date, no ear buds meet that qualification, so wearing ear buds under muffs should be discouraged since the combination doesn't meet the standard. Employers are responsible for ensuring any buds and headsets owned and used by employees meet safety requirements.

Finally, the employer has the responsibility of requiring employees wear hearing protection when mowing. The employee does not get to choose whether to wear it or not. IMWCA recommends a no tolerance policy to help members avoid OSHA fines and to help guard the hearing of employees.

For more information contact IMWCA loss control or call Iowa OSHA consultation at (515) 281-7629.



Payroll audits

The 2014-2015 Fiscal Year is coming to an end, and that means payroll audits. Last year someone at your entity estimated the payroll on which the workers' compensation premium was based.

The purpose of the audit is to verify actual payroll figures to ensure that the appropriate amount of premium is collected. Audits will be performed in July and August by IMWCA's contracted firm, Information Providers, Inc. (IPI). Each member will receive a memorandum from IPI detailing the information needed to complete the audit, as well as an appointment letter to schedule the audit. Having this information readily available will help the auditor efficiently complete the audit with fewer callbacks to the member to obtain missing information.

After your audit has been completed, requests for changes or corrections must be made within 30 days of the date your audit was processed by IMWCA. That date will appear on the Audited Premium Schedule that will arrive with your copy of the audit. Your local agent will also receive copies of these documents. When the review period has ended, each member will receive either an invoice for the balance due, or a refund check. Questions about the audit process may be addressed to Madison Williamson or Jeff Hovey toll free at (800) 257-2708.

Flooding awareness

This time of year in Iowa can bring severe weather including flash flooding. Flooding poses many hazards that everyone should keep in mind and be prepared to deal with in as safe a manner as possible.

As the term implies, flash flooding can occur very quickly with little or no notice. Flash flooding can be the result of locally heavy rain, rapid snow melt or even the failure of a dam or levee. Low lying roadways and streets can become inundated with muddy water that makes it impossible to see what lies beneath.

Many people make a serious mistake when they try to walk or drive through a flooded area. Always remember to “turn around, don’t drown.”

Here are some statistics to share with co-workers, family and friends:

Deaths: The Centers for Disease Control reports that over half of all flood-related drowning deaths each year occur when drivers attempt to drive through flood waters.

Depth of Flood Water: It is never a good idea to attempt to walk or drive through rushing flood waters. It does not take very deep water to create a serious hazard:

- An adult walking in just six inches of swiftly moving flood water can be swept off their feet.
- It only takes one foot of rushing flood water to move a small car or vehicle.
- Two feet of flood water can physically move larger vehicles.

Unseen hazards can include:

- Washed out roadways, streets or even sidewalks.
- Open manholes; lids are often pushed up and away by water pressure.
- Items in which you can become entangled such as tree branches, downed power lines, cables and fencing.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; National Weather Service



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.

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