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IOWA MUNICIPALITIES WORKERS' COMPENSATION ASSOCIATION

IMWCA

Comments or suggestions, call
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(515) 244-7282 or email
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The Informer

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

Seasonal employees need safety orientation

After surviving another long, Iowa winter it is now time to focus on the upcoming summer season. For many of our members this also means the hiring of seasonal employees to help staff parks, pools and public works. IMWCA wants to take this opportunity to remind you that when hiring seasonal employees it is imperative to handle their employment process just as you would when hiring permanent staff.

Seasonal employees face the same workplace hazards as any other employee. The employer's responsibilities and associated liabilities are no different for its seasonal employees.

Pre-placement

physicals: A pre-placement physical is just as important to undertake for seasonal employees as your permanent staff. Pre-placement physicals provide you with a medical assessment of the person's

ability to undertake the essential functions of the position with or without restrictions. Thus, as an employer, you have more information to assist you in avoiding putting an employee in harm's way, even inadvertently.

New hire safety orientation: Another key element to maintaining a safe work environment is providing applicable safety training on policies, proce-

dures and equipment operation prior to the new employee (including seasonal) undertaking any activities. With seasonal employees it is often easy to put off this training, but please don't. Starting on their first day seasonal employees have the same exposure to hazards as any of your other staff.

Take the time to inform all new employees of the workplace hazards they may be exposed to as they perform their duties. Review applicable standard operating procedures (SOPs) before they undertake any activities. Also, never assume a new employee knows how to operate a piece of equipment properly,

even if they say they know how to do so. Do your own training with them to ensure they understand the equipment's proper and safe operation.

If a seasonal employee is injured as a result of an employer failing to provide applicable training, the ramifications can be serious and costly

over and above the employee's injury. Therefore, it is important to provide timely and applicable training. And remember, document all training and keep it on file.

IMWCA offers a free Online University to assist members with employee safety training. This resource also provides a documentation and tracking component. For more information

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about Online University, visit our Web site, www.imwca.org; then choose Online University under the Loss Control tab.

Seasonal employees are important to summer operations. Without them, local governments would be unable to provide the services that their citizens expect. Please make the effort to help ensure their safety on the job so that at the end of each day, everyone goes home safe.

Welcome, new members!

The following members have joined IMWCA:

Corydon

Jefferson County Rural Water District

Mason City Housing Authority

Murray

Mystic

West Liberty

Renewals mailed soon

IMWCA staff is currently processing renewal packets for the 2015-2016 policy period. Experience modification (MOD) factors have been promulgated and Payroll Worksheets processed. We anticipate mailing renewal packets on May 15.

The National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) sets the rates, which are approved by the State of Iowa Insurance Commissioner. All carriers in Iowa use the same rates. For the class codes that IMWCA writes, we are generally seeing a slight decrease in those rates. IMWCA continues to increase the discounts offered with the average discount for renewal being 33 percent. Many members will also enjoy a Good Experience Bonus, an additional discount for members with a MOD factor of .95 or better. The number of members receiving the Good Experience Bonus seems to be increasing, which means more members have favorable loss ratios and decreasing MOD factors.

Your local agent will also receive a copy of your renewal. Specific questions concerning your MOD factor, or your renewal, can be directed to your local, trusted advisor or Madison Williamson at IMWCA at madisonwilliamson@iowaleague.org or (515) 974-5341.

CLAIMS CORNER: Matt Jackson, Claims Manager

Heat-related illnesses

As the temperature starts to increase everyone who works outside should have an understanding of the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses. Every summer we see multiple heat-related claims from various departments. Some of these claims are minor, but a few cases have become severe for the injured worker as well as costly in terms of the medical treatment needed.

So what are the different types of heat-related illnesses? According to www.mayoclinic.org there are three types of heat-related illnesses:

Heat cramps are the mildest form of heat illness. Heat cramps are painful muscle cramps and spasms that occur during or after intense exercise and sweating in high heat. The cramps usually affect your calves, arms, abdominal wall and back.

Heat exhaustion results from loss of water and salt in the body. This occurs in conditions with extreme heat along with excessive sweating without adequate fluid and salt replacement. Some of the symptoms of heat exhaustion are faintness, dizziness, fatigue, headache and nausea.

Heat stroke is the most severe heat related illness. Heatstroke requires emergency treatment and can occur when your body temperature reaches 104 Fahrenheit. Heat stroke symptoms include altered mental state, nausea/vomiting, rapid breathing, headache and racing heart rate.

Preventing heat-related illnesses is your best defense. The Centers for Disease Control offers these prevention tips:

- Drink more fluids. (Avoid alcohol and fluids with caffeine.)
- Try to limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Rest often in shady areas.
- Wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.

Please have your employees familiarize themselves with the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses, and look for ways to avoid putting them in a potentially dangerous situation.

Avoid poison ivy, oak, sumac

Iowa roadsides, parks and woodlands are favorite places for people who enjoy outdoors. These areas are also maintained by your employees. Unfortunately, every year numerous employees are accidentally poisoned when they come in contact with one of several plants typically found in these locations. The most common plant encountered is poison ivy. Poison oak and poison sumac are also found in some of these settings.

Poisoning results from contact with the sap of the plant, either by touching or by picking up the toxins from animals, clothes or other items. Particles in the smoke of the burning plant may also carry toxins.

Contact with any of these plants can cause severe skin dermatitis, and symptoms may appear within hours or a few days. People vary in sensitivity to these plants, but typically itching and burning of the skin may be followed by a rash, redness, swelling and watery blistering. Individuals vary in their susceptibility to these plants.

Poisoning from these plants is largely preventable. Employees should also be taught to recognize these plants, particularly poison ivy, which is by far the most common.



Poison Ivy is a woody shrub or vine with hairy looking aerial roots. It grows to 10 feet or more, climbing high on trees, walls and fences or trails along the ground. All parts of poison ivy, including the roots, are poisonous at all times of the year. Plants are most frequently abundant along old

fence rows and edges of paths and roadways.

Leaf forms among plants, or even on the same plant, are as variable as the habit of growth; however the leaves almost always consist of three leaflets. The old saying, "leaflets three, let it be," is a reminder of this consistent leaf character.



Poison Oak usually does not climb as a vine, but occurs as a low growing shrub. Stems generally grow upright. Leaflets occur in threes, as in other ivy. The middle leaflet usually is lobed alike on both margins and

resembles a small oak leaf, while the two lateral leaflets are often irregularly lobed. The range in size of the leaves varies considerable even on the same plant.



Poison sumac grows as a coarse woody shrub or small tree. Mature plants range in height from 5 to 6 feet to small trees that may reach 25 feet. Poison sumac shrubs usually do not have a symmetrical treelike appearance. Typically, they lean and have branched stems with about the same diameter from ground level to middle height.

Leaves of poison sumac consist of 7 to 13 leaflets arranged in pairs with a single leaflet at the end of the midrib. The leaflets are elongated oval without marginal teeth or serration. They are 3 to 4 inches long, 1 to 2 inches wide, and have a smooth, velvety texture. In early spring their color is bright orange. Later, they become dark green and glossy on the upper surface and pale green on the lower, with scarlet midribs. In the early fall, leaves turn to a brilliant red-orange or russet shade.

To reduce the risk of coming into contact with toxic plants:

- The best defense against acquiring dermatitis or other reactions from toxic plants is not to come into contact with them. Learn to recognize, and avoid, toxic plants that you may encounter.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants with boots. Tucking your pants into your boots or socks helps prevent toxic plant contact with your skin.
- Look for toxic plants before touching objects such as rock outcrops or trees or picking up objects from the ground.
- Thoroughly inspect the area where you intend to sit.

More information is available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/plants/

Like this newsletter?

Check out the multitude of member resources online at www.imwca.org.

- Model/sample programs including general safety manual
- Return to Work Now (RTWNow) online tool
- Best Practices Program
- Underwriting Information
- MORE!

Safely Speaking

OSHA announces second annual stand-down

I worked construction for 10 years before my fall. It shattered my body and my livelihood.

Work safely. Use the right equipment.

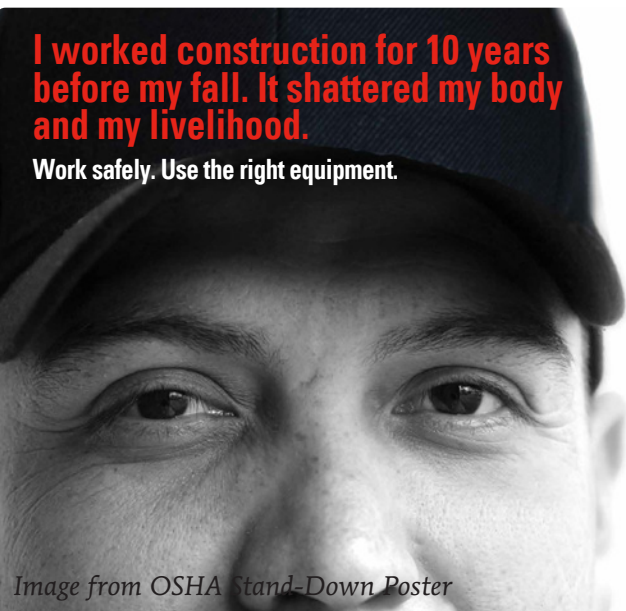


Image from OSHA Stand-Down Poster

Building on last year's widespread participation, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will host the second-annual Fall Safety Stand-Down May 4-15.

The two-week National Fall Safety Stand-Down is part of OSHA's fall prevention campaign (www.osha.gov/stopfalls). OSHA and partners would like to encourage all workers and employers that face fall hazards on the job to participate in this year's Stand-Down. The newly launched National Safety Stand-Down 2015 Web site, found at www.osha.gov/StopFallsStand-Down/resources.html, provides: information on how to conduct a Stand-Down; a certificate of participation; and access free education and training resources, fact sheets and other outreach materials in English and Spanish. It will also include a list of stand-down events free and open to the public as soon as they become available.

Safely Speaking

Below 100 training available in May

On average, more than 150 law enforcement officers have died in the line of duty each year during the last two decades. Law enforcement is a dangerous profession. Unfortunately, too many officer deaths and injuries are due to "accidents" or otherwise preventable circumstances. In some years, the number of deaths due to accidents is actually higher than the number of deaths due to felonious assault. The Below 100 Initiative was started in 2011 with the mission of

reducing line-of-duty deaths of law enforcement officers to less than 100 per year, which hasn't happened since 1943. IMWCA and Below 100 are partnering to offer the 8-hour instructor course on May 11 in Storm Lake or on May 12 at Camp Dodge in Johnston.

All courses are provided FREE of charge, however seating is limited to 50 participants. Register online at

www.counterdrugtraining.com.

The Below 100 Initiative aims to reduce line-of-duty deaths of law enforcement officers to less than 100 per year, which hasn't happened since 1943.

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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