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ONLINE UNIVERSITY COURSE HIGHLIGHT

Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls for Firefighters: ST62

Learn more online
www.imwca.org

IOWA MUNICIPALITIES WORKERS' COMPENSATION ASSOCIATION

IMWCA

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



the Informer

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

Second leading cause of workplace fatalities

Few people have avoided the unpleasant experience of slipping and falling, or tripping and catching themselves before they go over. When we see someone from afar have the same experience, we often catch ourselves with a chuckle. Unless we see they are injured, then it's not so funny.

Falls aren't funny. In fact, IMWCA experienced two fatalities in fiscal year 2014-2015, and both were attributed to a slip and fall.

That's bad news.

Rather than quote a bunch of statistics about how slip and fall incidents are the second leading cause of workplace fatalities (after motor vehicle crashes). Let's look at some strategies to prevent the slip and fall, and the injuries that go with them.

Start with footwear. Proper footwear can help keep you on your feet, rather than having them go out from under you. Sports like track, basketball and even golf have footwear designed specifically to provide the best traction for the conditions. The same principle applies to your workplace. Many general contractors (at least the good ones) will not allow anyone on a job site without safety toed shoes, not even the architect who designed the project.

Next, think about your vehicle. Getting in and out of vehicles contributes to many slip and fall injuries, even passenger vehicles. Entering and exiting vehicles and equipment requires using three points of contact. This means either two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand are in contact with the stepping surface. Three points of contact apply to all vehicles, including passenger cars and light trucks. Keep your hands free when entering and exiting any vehicle.

Offices, shops and warehouses present similar hazards. Keep an eye out for extension cords, equipment or tools left in walkways, uneven and slippery surfaces, and loose rugs or mats. Poor lighting can contribute to a slip, trip or fall, so maintain good lighting where you are working.

Ladders and stairs present countless opportunities to slip and fall. Remember those three points of contact? They apply when going up and down ladders and stairs. Keep your hands free, take your time and pay attention to the ascent and descent. Carrying something that blocks your view or keeps you from practicing three points of contact contribute to many injuries, both on and off the job.

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Welcome, Montie Gannon



The Iowa League of Cities welcomes Montie Gannon as the administrative assistant for the Iowa Municipalities Workers' Compensation Association. Gannon spent the last several years working in sales and customer service. She enjoys spending time with friends, family

and going racing.

As the administrative assistant, Gannon will maintain IMWCA member files, process member renewals and audits as well as applications for membership, and provide support for claims administration, loss control and marketing.

Please join us in welcoming Montie.

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This time of year weather plays a significant role in keeping us on our feet. Rain changing to ice and snow are inevitable in Iowa. Be prepared to deal with slippery surfaces by practicing good housekeeping, placing signage to raise awareness, and of course, wear proper footwear for the season.

We started this article with bad news. The good news is, slip and fall injuries (and fatalities) are largely preventable. Loss control has developed a Slip, Trip and Fall Handbook available online (www.imwca.org/LossControl/pages/ModelPrograms.aspx). Take advantage of this and the many other online resources to keep from becoming a slip, trip or fall statistic.

CLAIMS CORNER:

Matt Jackson, Claims Manager

Importance of keeping medical appointments

Every day medical appointments are missed by people who forgot to or planned not to show up. When an employee is scheduled for a doctor's appointment or a physical therapy appointment, it is imperative that they attend those appointments. Failure to attend these appointments can give the doctor the impression that the injury is not significant or has been resolved. It is also important to keep the appointment if the injured employee will be receiving diagnostic testing or blood test results. Many times these testing results will determine the course of medical treatment that will be needed.

We understand that everyone has a life outside of work, but when a claims examiner notices a constant rescheduling or missing of medical appointments that raises a red flag. It is important to remember that legitimate injured employees want to get treatment in order to heal and return to full-duty work. When appointments are missed or constantly rescheduled we have to wonder what else is going on in the injured employee's schedule. When an injured employee goes to some treatment, but not all the time, this can mean that they are doing just enough to keep the claim alive, but missing just enough treatments to not get better.

Non-compliance refers to a patient that does not follow the doctor's recommendations or orders. This may alter and prohibit successful medical treatment. Many surgical procedures have strict pre- or post-operative instructions which are necessary for safety as well as



achieving the best possible outcome. It is important that the injured employee have open communication with the physician to understand the importance of following the instructions.

Remember, not working to recover or not attending medical appointments could result in the suspension of benefits. When an appointment is set the injured employee should create reminders so they can keep and be on time for their appointments. This helps to ensure the injured employee can recover and return to meaningful work.

Dealing with sustained cold at work

Source: Iowa Department of Transportation

Now that fall is turning to winter it is time to think about dealing with cold weather. Day after day of below zero temperatures can take a toll on our bodies, even those who mostly work in indoor environments. For those that work outside, it can be extremely dangerous. So, how can we best prepare ourselves to handle difficult winter weather?

Planning ahead is the best strategy. Here are some basic tips:

Monitor weather forecasts, and be aware of what type of weather is moving into your area.

- Weather in Iowa can change very quickly. It may be a nice day to start, but a weather front can quickly move through and drop temperatures like a rock. Know the forecast, and dress appropriately, or bring winter clothing with you.
- Consider postponing and rescheduling activities that may be dangerous to conduct in extreme cold.
- The more you can stay out of the cold, the better off you will be.
- If you or your employees do have to venture out, make sure to first discuss with staff the symptoms of frost bite and hypothermia. Encourage them to not only look out for themselves, but to look after each other as well.

- For those on the road or at remote work sites, keep in frequent communication with a main facility (i.e., two-way radio, cell phone, land lines.) Ensure that working environments are prepared for extreme cold.

- Make sure that furnace exhausts are not blocked by snow or ice. If these become blocked, carbon monoxide can build up in your facility.
- Plug in vehicles equipped with engine heaters that are kept outside or in cold storage. This makes for quicker starting and less exposure to cold while trying to get equipment started.
- Keep emergency winter survival kits in work vehicles that may travel away from your facilities. If the vehicle should break down or get stuck in a blizzard, such a kit can provide the employee with the needed resources to prevent injury or even death. Information on vehicle winter travel safety can be found on the Iowa Department of Transportation Web site: www.iowadot.gov/maintenance/winterSafety.html

Stay safe. Stay warm. Dream of spring.

Thank YOU

As Thanksgiving approaches we want to let you know we're thankful to you, our members, for your loyalty and commitment to safety. Please, have a happy, and safe, Thanksgiving!

Our office will be closed November 26-27 so staff can celebrate Thanksgiving with family and friends.

The office will also be closed the afternoon of December 24 and all day December 25 and January 1. Claims should still be reported immediately through Company Nurse during this time. Thank you!

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.

IMWCA STAFF

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Alan Kemp

Director of Risk Services

Jeff Hovey

Claims Manager

Matt Jackson

Senior Claims Examiner

Chuck Williams

Claims Examiner

Kim Bohaty-Gannon

Medical-Only Claims Examiner

Jenny McKenzie

Loss Control Coordinator

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