

NIRMA's

Loss Prevention and
Safety Department
Monthly Newsletter



NIRMA's Safety Shorts

2019 APR 10 PM 12:13
RECEIVED
Dodge County Highway Dept

APR 10 2019
230

April 1, 2019

Volume 70 Number 13



April Is Stress Awareness Month

Everyone feels stressed from time to time.

Stress can lead to a number of major health problems, ranging anywhere from anxiety to severe depression and from mild acne to life-threatening heart attacks, so it is easy to see why it is so vitally important to keep life's major stressors in check.



GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Emergency Operation Plans

Employers should have an Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) in place, also known as an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) or Emergency Response Plan (ERP), for any reasonably foreseeable emergency. These plans should be in writing and contained in your county's safety manual. Employees should train on these plans regularly so that they know precisely how to react in a given emergency. This month's article will cover some of the emergencies that your EOP should cover.

The weather this spring has shown us just how extreme and severe the Nebraska weather can be. At the same time, one end of the state was experiencing blizzard conditions while the other was experiencing historic flooding. Was your county prepared? What did you learn, and in some counties still learning, about severe weather preparation? What will you do differently next time similar weather is forecast? Severe thunderstorms, lightning, wind, hail, tornado, flooding, we stand a much better chance of dealing with these emergencies if we have a plan in place before they occur. If evacuation is recommended where will you go, what will you take? If you are required to shelter in place, is there room for everyone in the severe weather shelter?

Workplace violence or an active shooter, if someone that intends to do harm, gains access to the building do you have a plan? Where will you run to? Where will you hide? What do you have access to that you can use to fight the attacker?

If you are required to shelter in place or evacuate your workplace, will you be able to account for all employees in your area? Accountability is a very serious issue during an emergency event. We don't want to waste precious resources attempting to locate an employee that is unaccounted for only to find out they went home when they heard the siren versus went into the severe weather shelter.

I receive requests for EOPs quite regularly. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for an outside agency to put together an effective EOP because they must be site specific. An EOP for the NIRMA office will not work for XYZ County's courthouse. Each location is unique and will require a plan tailored to fit it specifically. There are resources available, such as your Emergency Manager, FEMA and NEMA, just to name a few.

If you need assistance developing your county's EOP, please contact NIRMA's Loss Prevention and Safety Department at 1.800.642.6671 or chad@nirma.info.

Loss Prevention
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**State officials:
Nebraska flood
damage
estimates now
nearly \$1.4
billion**

The governor said an estimate of 2,067 homes and 341 businesses were damaged or destroyed.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture said the devastation to livestock and fields will cost the state an estimated \$400 million.

The NDOT projected a cost of \$200 million to repair state infrastructure.

NDOT said the disaster impacted 16 bridges, 11 of which are projected to need full replacement.

Gov. Ricketts said 74 of Nebraska's 93 counties are in a state of emergency.



HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Flood Damage to County Roads and Drainage Structures

I have spent 42 years working in and with county road departments. I have witnessed some terrible weather and horrendous flood damage to county roads and drainage structures, but never have I witnessed the widespread devastation that ravaged our state this spring.

Updated information shows that 81 counties, 98 cities and 5 tribal areas have declared a state of emergency as a result of the recent flooding and snow storms. This is 87 percent of the state's 93 counties that have declared a state of emergency which does not include those counties that have flood damage but do not meet the required damage dollar threshold or have yet to declare a state of emergency.

Ninety-five percent of the state's total population or 1,735,635 million Nebraskans, were affected by the recent storms. On top of those statistics, 59,088 square miles or 76.39 percent of the entire state were affected.

Richardson County had serious flooding in 1992 and 1993 with approximately \$4.3 million in damage, with bridges destroyed in the double figures, yet that flooding was localized in southeast Nebraska. Some of those bridges were never replaced due to lack of funds.

The most recent flooding encompassed a majority of the state. The loss of life, livestock, personal property, etc. is beyond comprehension! I have heard the question as to how long it will take counties to recover and make road and bridge repairs. There is no easy answer as dry material is required to make road repairs and with all the flooded areas, dry dirt is hard to come by. The repair and replacement of bridges and other structures will take years to rebuild to proper, safe standards. Most counties do not have the necessary annual budget or reserve funds to replace large bridges and other projects. Some of the larger structures could easily take five or six years, maybe longer, to rebuild. Damage assessments must be done, permits obtained, paperwork completed, engineering design plans approved, and then bids solicited by county. Then funding from FEMA or other sources must be secured.

Road department personnel and the motoring public likely have not seen damage to this extent before. The following initial suggestions hopefully will assist in preparing for FEMA's visit to your county.

- One of the first things road department management should do is assemble a team of responsible county road department employees to conduct project inspections and project location maps. Projects should be given a number, placed on the county map and also used in the description. A written description of each project should be completed with photos taken from several angles of each specific project. The description, location maps and photos are some of the most important information in the FEMA process.

Loss Prevention
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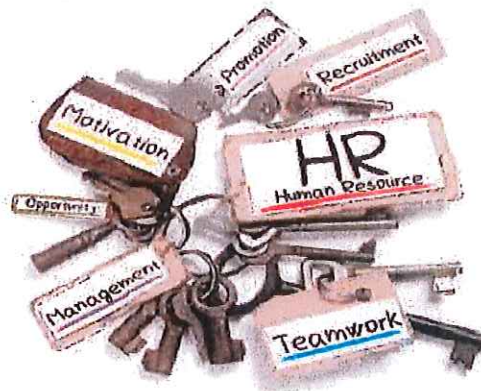


Flood Damage to County Roads and Drainage Structures *continued*

- A data base of information with project location maps, project numbers, damage explanation, cost estimate, project final cost and very importantly, photos of damage should also be developed to compile information for FEMA. A separate file needs to be made of each project with all information from said project placed in that file for FEMA reference.
- Ensure that you use FEMA's most recent Schedule of Equipment Rates for your estimated project repairs and final project repair/replacement expenditures. It is very difficult to go back and make changes to each project so ensure you comply with all FEMA requirements and complete all forms properly, from the beginning.
- Remember, if you do not have good documentation and photos, you may not receive funding from FEMA for that project once it has been repaired or replaced. It may take FEMA inspectors 4 or 5 months to get to your county to make inspections.
- Ensure you are working closely with your Emergency Manager as he/she will have access to all necessary information.

We have assisted a number of counties with flood project information, public notices, sample load limit policies, etc. We understand the difficulties you are experiencing so please contact me at 402-310-4417 or email tim@nirma.info with any questions pertaining to your concerns and we will assist as much as possible. Be Safe.

There are many keys
to being an effective
public official.



In today's business arena, challenges can arise at any time, and to be an effective leader you need to be able to respond to those challenges with intelligence, strategy, and expertise.



Loss Prevention and Safety

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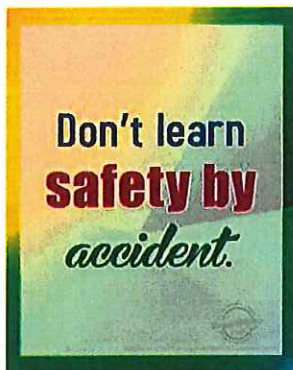
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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Firearm Range Safety

Whether the county owns a firing range, or a range is privately owned for firearm training each agency should develop a policy that addresses firing ranges and firearm safety on the range.

The purpose of developing a policy is simple; to address the safety rules and regulations of the agency's firing range. Anytime your agency is on the range the primary responsibility is to create and maintain a safe range environment for the shooters, the instructors and the community. Certified instructor should always be present on the range anytime the range is occupied for live fire. The instructors do more than just train the shooter, but also must constantly evaluate the range for potential safety issues such as, ricochets, visual obstructions and unauthorized access on the range during live fire exercises.

I know you never expect it, but do officers carry proper medical equipment to address the potential of an emergency event? Do you know how long advanced medical care will take to get to your location should something happen? Does anyone know that you are out on the firing range?

Without the constant awareness of firearm safety, tragedies can easily occur like the one that happened in 1999 involving Nebraska State Trooper Mark Wagner. Trooper Wagner suffered an accidental, fatal gunshot wound during a training exercise in North Platte.

Range time is essential for training to ensure officers can perform at the highest degree of proficiency during the stress when faced with armed encounters, but again the primary concern for all is safety and officer's utilizing the range should be expected to adhere to the highest safety measures

Range rules instruction should be included anytime anyone accesses the range and especially before any live fire exercise begins.

During training exercises, I really don't think anyone thinks about what bad things could happen, and when it does we seem somewhat surprised and in many of the cases when bad things occur it could have had been prevented by simply taking the time to ensure that safety protocols were addressed and being adhere too.

Everyone is responsible for safe practices while on the range and rules and regulations need to be enforced and instilled to ensure safe practices are constantly being applied. In spite of all the rules and regulations your agency may incorporate, it only takes one unsafe act or unsafe thoughtfulness to turn a training exercise into a tragic event.

Through continuous safety awareness, dedication and instruction, you can ensure all necessary rules and regulations are being followed which in turn will help run a safe, professional and efficient firing range.

If you are lacking a firing range policy, NIRMA provides a model policy you can review and implement to enhance your agency standards and enhance agency safety.