

NIRMA's Safety Shorts

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August Is Back to School Safety Month

School days bring congestion: School buses are picking up their passengers, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school before the bell rings, harried parents are trying to drop their kids off before work. It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are present – especially before and after school.



GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Cyber Security – It Isn't Going Away

Have you ever noticed how some topics show up in the news, are super-hot for a while, and then disappear? Some topics do disappear, while others just quit being reported on. In this month's article we are going to talk again about Cyber Security, it is not going to disappear. The news will report on cyberattacks and breaches when they happen to large, recognizable companies, but they don't say much when it happens to small government, which unfortunately is still occurring.

CBS News reported that in June two different cities in Florida suffered ransomware attacks and were forced to pay rather large sums to regain control of their computer systems. Lake City, FL paid hackers \$460,000 to give back control of email and servers. A week earlier, Riviera Beach, a Palm Beach suburb, voted to pay hackers \$600,000 so that they could retrieve records that the hackers had encrypted.

It is believed that in both instances, the hackers got into the systems when an employee clicked on an email link that allowed the malware to be uploaded. All the articles I've read and trainings I've attended have made it quite clear to me, our employee's ability to recognize spam mail or phishing emails is imperative when it comes to protecting our IT system from hackers. These emails appear as though they were sent from a legitimate person or business and the email attempts to get the recipient to click on a link or open an attachment that contains the virus or malware.

Please don't believe that just because you don't see cyberattacks in the news that they aren't happening. Make sure that your employees are aware and are vigilant in scanning emails before opening them. Educate them regarding the different ways that scammers and hackers try to gain access to your system.

NIRMA offers multiple resources to assist members with their cyber security programs. NIRMA's 10 Best Cyber Security Practices are available on the Interact portal. As is the eRisk Hub which provides a variety of articles and information on cyber security and cyberattacks. Loss Prevention staff is available to provide in person training sessions on the topic as well. Finally, keep your eye out for the upcoming Self Defense for Counties conference in October of this year. We plan to provide additional information on cyber security during at least one session.

Please contact me at chad@nirma.info or 800.642.6671 if you have any questions.

Loss Prevention
and
Safety

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School bus accidents are somewhat of a rarity, and thankfully we don't hear about children being injured in devastating crashes too often – especially when you consider that some 480,000 school buses carry 25 million kids each day. That's more than half of America's schoolchildren.



No regrets when you
drive with care!

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

School Bus Safety

August is National Back to School Month. School buses will soon be running again and extra care should be taken when road department trucks and equipment are traveling county roads. Instruct your employees to be extra careful at intersections, while blading roads and during other road maintenance and construction activities.

Now is a good time to contact school representatives and ask for school bus route maps so those routes can be inspected for road sign and road conditions and inspect intersections where weeds and brush may be hindering sight of oncoming traffic and remove those hazards. Line of sight height at intersections is three and a half feet (3.5 ft.) above the surface of the road, so ensure sight distance problems are removed below that height or better yet, removed altogether. Remember to spray brush once it has been cut to prevent regrowth. Road sign height is a minimum of five feet from edge of road to bottom of sign. Ensure brush, trees and weeds do not block visibility of road signs.

Ensure "School Bus Stop Ahead" signs are in good condition including but not limited to the proper height, color, retroreflectivity, advanced placement, etc. Visit with school officials as to any sight distance or signing concerns they may have and work to correct those concerns. It's critical to maintain good public relations with our school's whose buses travel our roads nearly every day during the week.

Corn, at this time of year, is very tall and presents sight distance problems. Counties have little control over this problem unless the corn is planted in county rights-of-way. Remove any corn that has been planted in county right-of-way after first discussing the concern with the landowner/tenant. This not only presents a huge safety issue for school buses full of kids and other motorists but is a liability issue as well. The county can be named in a lawsuit due to tall corn in county rights-of-way causing sight distance problems but the farmer can be named as well. The landowner/tenant is responsible for his crops on private property.

Have a short safety meeting with all road department and other county employees who drive county roads and remind them that school starts soon and buses will be running. Young people with school permits will be driving with little experience as well as parents taking their kids to school, so be extra careful on all roads! There have been far too many school bus accidents in the past so please do your best to inform your employees to travel safely and remove sight distance concerns and to improve signing.

If you have any questions, please contact Tim at 402-310-4417 or tim@nirma.info. Be safe.

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Whether you are exploring the idea of a career in *law enforcement*, wanting a closer look at the Law Enforcement Department or concerned about crime, *ride-alongs* can be a positive learning experience.



LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Ride-Along

In an effort to enhance the mutual respect of sheriff office personnel and the community in which they serve, many agencies have established ride-along programs. This program provides participants with a greater understanding of how law enforcement works in the county and at the same time, through interaction between the deputies and members of the community, it can open lines of communications and trust.

If your county permits ride-along, you need to have a ride-along policy in place, so the host deputy as well as the person conducting the ride-along, can completely understand what is expected throughout the ride-along experience. Participants need to completely understand the inherent dangers of law enforcement and what they may encounter.

At a minimum, the following rules should be applied to the participant:

- All ride-along participants must be at least 19 years old and be required to sign an agency liability waiver form;
- Ride-along participants should be required to apply in writing, the application should then be reviewed including a record check to determine if the applicant qualifies to participate in the program and must be approved by the Sheriff;
- Participants should not be allowed to participate in the ride-along program more than twice a year;
- Ride along programs should have a designated time they are permitted;
- Applications should provide the applicant with rules, such as they will play no active role in law enforcement functions, they must only act as observer unless otherwise instructed by the host deputy;
- Participants must remain in the law enforcement vehicle, must not speak to the victims, witnesses, prisoners, etc.;
- Participants should not bring recording equipment, shall not enter any one home or vehicle, unless directed by the host deputy;
- Participants should not be allowed to carry firearms or other weapons;
- Participants should be dressed appropriately.

Host deputies have a responsibility, as well, when transporting a ride-along such as:

- Have a complete understanding of their obligation to the welfare and safety of the ride-along participant. Deputy's should not be responding to emergency calls or be involved in a pursuit to avoid exposing the ride-along participant to any dangers;
- Communication Center should be fully aware of any ride-along from the start to finish time;
- Not have more than one ride-along at a time;

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for the
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It will be
well worth
your time!

Ride-Along *continued*

- Host deputies must know their locations at all times and in the event a emergency situation arises causing the host deputy to respond, the host deputy must determine a safe location to drop the participant off where the ride-along is safe and not in harm's way.

For the most part, the safety of the person on the ride-along must constantly be considered. Something to keep in mind, it not always possible for the host deputy to avoid a situation in which the person riding along may be in danger, so due diligence that considers risks and benefits must be included, whether to permit this activity. Although a common practice, ride-alongs are not without risk, so policy is essential part of limiting exposures, but only if followed and enforced.

For more information or to request training involving law enforcement and/or corrections operations., contact Terry at: terry@nirma.info, or 402-686-9332.



Watch Your Mail for the Upcoming 12th Annual Self Defense for County Officials Conference brochure.

In the weeks ahead, we will be mailing out complete details about the conference sessions and how you can register.

October 3 & 4, 2019

18 ¾ hours of educational sessions