

NIRMA's

Loss Prevention and Safety Department
Monthly Newsletter

NIRMA's Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway & Law Enforcement

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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Law Enforcement Policy and Training

March Is Employee Spirit Month

It's also one of those in-between months where it's not really winter anymore but not quite spring yet... so employee morale is often low. And when morale is low, it's not long before performance and productivity suffer. Do activities that create enthusiasm, excitement, and a feeling of community in your workplace.



Everyone knows the basic functions of a law enforcement officer, enforcing laws, preventing crimes, responding to calls for service, serving and protecting the public, just to name a few. But these typically everyday functions can also prove to be a perceived liability to the officer and to the county. Liability or not is determined by the officer's response and actions and that will be based off the officers' training and as it relates to agency procedural guidelines.

Managing risk in law enforcement is challenging at times, as many of the events that seem to draw liability allegations are calls for service that required law enforcement response as well as some type of action, the fact of the matter is liability exposures occur daily in the law enforcement profession. Gordan Graham, an expert in law enforcement risk management said it best, "everything you do in life and law enforcement involves around risk", his statement is so true.

I remember thinking after serving as Sheriff for a year or so comparing my new procedures to my old directives and what I was taught and use too with my Sheriff, who was a great guy, a good Sheriff, he was just from a different time period. I really thought my agency was well protected through adopted policies, monthly trainings we made mandatory and the supervision oversight of the entire operation, but how I quickly realized how vulnerable my agency was even with all of the enhanced resources and tools put in place to reduce liability exposures.

One thing I quickly discovered was policy without training is simply a waste of documentation. Every time policy is issued the norm is to make sure personnel who receive a copy sign for it, a waiver of receipt, that they had received and read the new or revised policy, but what you discover is many, now not all mind you, personnel sign, but don't read or read the procedure thoroughly enough to completely understand or follow it.

Policy is developed through time and research, so we expect personnel to follow the directions outlined, but the only way to ensure policy compliance is to ensure that every option is provided to allow personnel to be successful every time they carry out the performance of their duties, and that is accomplished only through training and supervision, if your policies are up to date, so should your trainings.

I talk all the time of about identifying critical task of operations within your organizations, high risk calls that expose you agency to liability, now I realize as I have earlier mentioned, any call for service can expose an agency to litigation, but if you regularly train the chances of exposure could easily be reduced.

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to schedule

training involving

law enforcement

and/or

corrections

operations.



Law Enforcement Policy and Training *continued*

Nationwide law enforcement critical tasks that require the most attention to detail are:

- Use of force
- Pursuit and emergency vehicle operations
- Search and seizures
- Care, custody, and control of prisoners
- Domestic violence
- Property and evidence
- Off-duty conduct
- Sexual harassment
- Selection and hiring
- Internal investigations
- Special operations- SWAT, K9, etc.
- Dealing with mentally ill
- Racial profiling

This past year you could clearly see use of force and racial profiling at the top of the list and these two tasks affected every law enforcement agency nationwide.

The chances of making mistakes in this profession is high, even with excessive training, but when mistakes occur hopefully the damages are minimal and can be defended and corrected.

Proper training and up to date policy development is essential for the success of an organization, it's personnel and the county, resources are necessary and incumbent to help protect the agency from unwanted allegations of wrong doings. Don't let policy and training be your weakest link of your organization, ensure your people are up to the task and can handle each call for service, each public encounter in a consistent and confident manner...prioritize and promote policy and training in your organization.

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Money for Minutes Announcement

I am incredibly excited to announce that I have obtained approval to increase the number of Money for Minutes awards from two to five for calendar year 2021! So, this year, five different committees will have a chance at winning \$500.00 to use for their safety committee's budget.

In 2018 NIRMA debuted the Money for Minutes program and we saw a 51% increase in the number of members that held four quarterly safety committee meetings, reviewed all incidents, events and injuries and submitted minutes to NIRMA for review. The last two years we have seen a significant drop off in the number of committees holding quarterly meetings. I am sure this drop off in meetings may have something to do with the statewide flooding in 2019 and the worldwide pandemic in 2020.

My hopes are that the additional awards will lead to another increase in safety committees meeting that we will be able to sustain into future years. Again, it requires more than just hold a meeting to be eligible for Money for Minutes. During the meeting all incidents, injuries, events, claims, etc. that occurred during the prior quarter are to be discussed. The point of the

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The **first** Best
Safety Practice is
to adopt an
effective safety
manual for all
employees to
receive training on
and follow.

Nebraska Intergovernmental
Risk Management Association



Model
Road Department
Safety Manual

Prepared by the Model
County Road Department Safety Manual Committee

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Money for Minutes Announcement *continued*

the discussion is to identify changes that can be made to reduce the possibility of that incident occurring again. Please include that discussion in the minutes and then simply email me a copy of the minutes at chad@nirma.info.

Please resist the urge to simply classify each incident or injury as "preventable" or "not preventable." Dig deeper and try to identify the root cause, by stating an incident was not preventable we are saying that each time that task is completed, we can expect a similar outcome. That is unacceptable.

If your county or agency was fortunate enough to not have any new incidents to discuss, please look at training topics or perform worksite inspections or any of the other recommended Best Safety Practices for Counties. Be proactive with your committee's loss prevention efforts. As always, it is my pleasure to assist your committee, I can always be reached at chad@nirma.info or 1.800.842.6671.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Model Road Department Safety Manual

One of the important items found missing from the Internal Road Department Assessments conducted in 2017 and 2018 was a comprehensive Road Department Safety Manual. Only 25 of 82 members at the time, or 30%, had Road Department Safety Manuals, some of which were seriously lacking in important safety issues.

Due to those findings, NIRMA has developed a Model Road Department Safety Manual for our member counties. We have done our best to make it a comprehensive manual, but you may want to add safety topics that pertain specifically to your county.

One of the first things county boards and road department management need to realize is this manual is a MODEL. The county board and highway superintendent should review and make any changes to fit your county prior to adoption by the county board. Don't just adopt the manual as is without review as there may be issues that you want to change. We have provided the manual in WORD form on a CD so you can easily edit as well as add your county name in the proper locations.

After reviewing, editing, and adopting the manual, an in-depth safety training should be held with all county road department employees to review the manual. New employees should be given the county road department safety manual as soon after hire as practical, along with other necessary paperwork.

Safety should be a priority in every county road department. NIRMA's workers' compensation adjusters continuously receive injury claims which could be greatly reduced through a good, comprehensive safety program.

Safety culture is the way in which safety is managed in the workplace, and often reflects "the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and values that employees share in relation to safety." Every county has a safety culture, whether it be good or bad. A good, positive safety culture will reduce accidents and

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The Objective of
this manual is
twofold:

(1)

to assist
members in
analyzing the
effectiveness of
an existing safety
manual: and

(2)

to serve as a
guide and
provide the
framework for
members when
creating a safety
manual.

**Model Road
Department Safety
Manuals will be
delivered to
member county
road departments
in the near future.**

Model Road Department Safety Manual *continued*

and injuries, reduce claims and lawsuits, and generally provide a good, safe work environment for your employees.

A safety manual is more effective at preventing accidents if you get support from management and employees. You want everyone involved in reading the manual, updating it from time to time with accurate information and attending training according to the procedures detailed in the manual. With upper management support, employees become more aware that safety is important in your county's positive safety culture. You can hold them accountable for knowing the relevant parts of the safety manual based on their job duties.

Adopting a comprehensive safety manual, developing a road department safety committee, holding quarterly committee meetings, presenting quarterly safety training to employees, conducting quarterly shop safety audits, etc., all contribute to a good, positive safety culture that benefits everyone.

Please let me know of any questions by calling me at 402-310-4417 or email at tim@nirma.info. Be Safe.

ATTENTION NIRMA CONTACT PERSONS

Have you ever felt it can sometimes be a challenge to keep up with changes in personnel or contact information that occur your county or agency?

Now, imagine keeping track of that information for the 83 counties and 22 county-associated agencies that are NIRMA members. Yes, it is challenging, but that is why we are relying on you.

NIRMA maintains an extensive database containing the names of officeholders, their mailing addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers. This information is used when sending out this monthly Safety Shorts newsletter, our monthly **Interchange** magazine, periodic mailings, or when it is necessary to contact someone directly.

We certainly know you already have a lot to do with your job, but we would appreciate you letting us know in a timely manner when changes occur in our county or agency. That way we can keep our database up-to-date and ensure we can make contact when necessary.

Next time a change occurs in your county or agency, please forward your updated information to Pat Clancy at **pat@nirma.info**.