

NIRMA's

Loss Prevention and Safety Department
Monthly Newsletter

NIRMA's Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway & Law Enforcement

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December is time to gather with family and friends.

NIRMA staff would like to thank you for a great 2021 and wish you a safe and happy New Year!



GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Portable Heater Safety

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths. As the temperatures drop portable heaters begin to turn up in workplaces and homes. Whenever you introduce a heat source, or ignition source, you increase the risk of a fire. If you plan to use a portable heater in your office or at home here are few tips from the NFPA that you can follow to reduce the risk of a fire:

- Purchase a heater that bears the seal of a qualified testing laboratory, e.g., Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.
- Keep the heater at least 3 feet from any flammable material.
- Choose a heater with a thermostat and overheat protection.
- Place the heater on a solid, flat surface.
- Make sure your heater has an auto shut-off to turn the heater off if it tips over.
- Keep space heaters out of the way of foot traffic and never block an exit.
- Keep children away from space heaters.
- Plug the heater directly into the wall outlet, never use an extension cord.
- Space heaters should be turned off and unplugged when you leave the room or if you go to bed.
- Do not place your space heater beneath your desk.

For more information on winter fire safety, you can visit www.nfpa.org/education.



Did you know?

45,000

There are approximately 45,000 home electrical fires each year.

Plug only 1 heat-producing appliance directly into a wall outlet at a time.



Never use an extension cord with a heat-producing appliance.



U.S. Fire Administration



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Seven Basic General Work Safety Rules

- Keep work areas clean. ...
- Use the proper tool for the job. ...
- Always wear the proper PPE for the work task. ...
- Never work on live equipment. ...
- Make sure chemicals are properly labeled and stored.
- Communicate hazards to other personnel. ...
- Stop work when needed to address hazards.



HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist
County Employee Volunteer Emergency Services

Let me begin by thanking all our member county employees who are presently serving or have served our country in the armed services, all law enforcement officers, those who volunteer as firefighters, EMTs, rescue personnel, first responders, etc. You are greatly appreciated.

This article will address several issues related to how members can mitigate the risks related to volunteer emergency services.

First up is the safety of county employees when they provide volunteer emergency services during wildfire season. If employees are authorized by the County to assist in wildfire control on county time and using county equipment, they should be properly trained. Training specific to wildfires is available through the State Fire Marshal's Office, and some training related to the protection of county equipment in this context is available through NIRMA. Training can be presented during down times in the winter months in advance of an upcoming fire season. The county can better protect its employees by ensuring they have the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when they are to be involved in fire control or when they perform any other volunteer emergency service while on county time.

Another concern with county employees providing volunteer emergency services is how the county plans for and manages those situations. Does the county have a policy that addresses how and when the county employee leaves his or her job to perform a volunteer service such as an EMT, first responder, firefighter, etc.? How long is the employee allowed to miss work? Have potential liabilities been fully considered? Can the employee use county equipment to respond to an emergency? A good example is a county road department employee, while driving a truck hauling gravel, who receives an emergency call and is only a mile away from the accident or incident. Can the employee use the county gravel truck to respond? These kinds of questions should be considered and answered if a county manager becomes aware that an employee is an emergency services volunteer.

County employees who have been given approval by their supervisor to provide volunteer emergency services while on the county time because they are a member of a volunteer agency should notify their supervisor as soon as possible after emergency call is received. Permission should be received prior to use of county vehicles and/or equipment in responding to emergency calls.

Our country was built on volunteer services and these services need to continue. Full-time paid firefighters, first responders, EMTs, etc., are greatly appreciated but cannot do it alone. Volunteers assist by performing the same services out of dedication, caring and concern for their community.

Having a sound, sensible policy in place in advance of an emergency makes it easier for those involved – the county employer and volunteer emergency services personnel – to understand what is allowed and what is not allowed.

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County Employee Volunteer Emergency Services - continued

NIRMA maintains a sample Emergency Services Policy that member counties can consider, which addresses volunteer services from a standpoint of cooperation in supporting such services. It is attached in Word document format so it can be easily modified to address a member's particular situations. Please remember to have any and all policies reviewed by your county attorney prior to adopting them.

This is my final article for NIRMA as I am retiring effective November 30, 2021. If you have any questions on the sample policy or this article, please contact my successor, KC Pawling at 402-310-4417 or

kcpawling@nirma.info.

I want to thank all of you whom I have worked with over the last nearly 20 years since I began as a consultant for NIRMA members. There have been a lot of laughs, and some disagreements, but I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you, and hopefully have provided assistance when needed to make your job easier, safer, and better. Take care of yourselves and Be Safe!!! God Bless.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Officer Safety and Wellness

If you ask a law enforcement officer why they chose this line of work, you will get a variety of different answers. Most may say they wanted to make a difference or give back to their community, while others said they found the work exciting and interesting, something different every day. No matter what your reason may have been at the start of your career, you knew the potential hazards that come with this particular profession.

But another hazardous aspect of this job that you may not be aware of is the physical dangers that impact your mental health and physical well-being. This profession is a stressful one and stress can negatively impact your physical and mental health which can also jeopardize officer safety.

The occupational fatality rate for law enforcement is three to five times greater than the national average for the working population. Law enforcement train to protect themselves from hazards they are confronted with, but most agencies don't have the resources to address concerns when it comes to protecting your mental and emotional well-being.

There have been numerous studies done as it relates to officer wellness and many officers involved in the study reported the law enforcement profession was a major contributor to their health issues. Those health concerns in the report ranged from sleep disorders, heart issues, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, mental health, other physical wellness issues and attempted suicides.

I was part of a law enforcement generation where my Sheriff, who started his career in 1955, felt if you could not handle the job then you need to find another profession. I am not faulting my Sheriff in his beliefs or actions, but he came from an age where physical and mental health issues

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We're on the Web

<https://nirma.info>

**For more
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Officer Safety and Wellness - *continued*

were considered a weakness and there were no wellness programs or resources offered to us if you were experiencing issues, you simply worked through them the best you could.

Health and wellness is a crucial component for officer safety, eating right (on duty and off), staying physical fit and addressing stress through a positive attitude or simply spending time with those you love, make time for your favorite hobbies or interests and keep the mind sharp by staying active.

Look there are things in this profession that may be too much for us to handle, that's not a weakness it's just part of being human, something we sometimes forget, remember you're not invincible. So, if needed seek social support or seek assistance through a mental health professional trained in stress management to address your health concerns it doesn't mean your broken.

With increasing challenges facing today's law enforcement take the time to invest in yourselves, strive to improve your health and mental well-being daily. No one questions the physical and mental demands of the job, but consider this, what emotionally impacts you on the job may also emotionally impact your colleges, friends, the public and especially our family back home.

I still carry a passion for this profession and can tell you every day you pin that star to your chest you make a difference, so take care of yourselves and one another.



**Wishing you a truly wonderful holiday season
filled with peace and love.**