

NIRMA'S

Loss Prevention and Safety Department
Monthly Newsletter

NIRMA's Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway & Law Enforcement

2020 OCT -1 PM 3:24
RECEIVED
COUNTY DEPT

October 1, 2020

Volume 8, Number 10



October Is National Ergonomics Month

Posture and ergonomics go hand in hand. Whether you are sitting or standing, keeping proper posture reduces stress on your spine and back. A lack of ergonomics is actually linked to work related injuries. Some of the most common include overexertion, awkward postures, vibrations, and performing repetitive motions. Small changes can have big benefits.



GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Fatalism and Loss Prevention

I was recently given a new book titled "Rethinking Hand Safety, Myths, Truths, and Proven Practices," authored by Joe Geng. Mr. Geng grew up in the glove manufacturing business. He knows a thing or two about gloves and hand safety. I am not much of a book reader, but what motivated me to crack this book open as Mr. Geng's company, Superior Glove, sent it to me along with a glove sample to try. It seemed it would have been rude and wasteful to not see what Mr. Geng had to say about hand safety.

There was plenty of information about gloves, but what surprised me was all the talk of cultural safety (or the lack thereof) and how it leads to injuries. Mr. Geng uses the term *fatalism*. I had not seen this term used in the safety realm before reading this book. He uses the term *fatalistic* to describe poor employers where the culture is such that they feel some injuries are just inevitable. They are an unavoidable cost of doing business.

Here at NIRMA I have seen evidence of this culture at times. You know the culture exists when you hear the statement, "Isn't that what we have insurance for?" Yes, but insurance exists to reduce the financial impact of accidents, injuries and property damage. Insurance should never be used to justify an organization's lack of a loss prevention and safety program. Mr. Geng says that fatalism is probably the leading indicator of a bad company and I would agree wholeheartedly.

Fatalism tends to creep in when committees review quarterly incident reports. I see the term "unavoidable" or "unpreventable" quite a bit. In some cases, it is not a reflection of the overall culture, but simply an easy out when it is difficult to come up with a way to reduce the risk of an incident reoccurring. The minute we say an injury cannot be prevented we have given up, whether it is at the employee level or the management level. If a county or agency employee feels that any type of injury is unavoidable it is a sign of an overall problem with the safety culture.

The purpose of a safety program is to reduce the risk of injuries and accidents, if we fall into a fatalistic mindset, we will cease to be effective. A good employer should reject fatalism by working toward zero injuries because they believe it is possible and that any level of injuries is unacceptable. Please do not tell me that zero injuries are impossible, there are companies with 10 times more employees than all NIRMA members combined that have been striving for zero injuries for years and years.

My research on zero injuries led to an article by Bill Sims Jr. that proposes the best way to work toward zero injuries is to focus on zero unsafe behaviors and conditions. Injuries are a lagging indicator while behaviors and conditions are leading indicators. Start a culture that does not allow

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Be prepared for
a snowstorm,
and stay *safe*
once the snow
arrives.



Think Safety

Fatalism and Loss Prevention *continued*

unsafe behaviors and conditions and a decrease in injuries and accidents will follow.

If you would like assistance reducing unsafe behaviors and conditions, please contact me at 1.800.642.6671 or chad@nirma.info. Take care!

ASSIST Deadline Approaching

Just a friendly reminder that the ASSIST deadline is fast approaching. November 1, 2020 is the deadline to submit reimbursement request for last year's ASSIST program and the deadline to submit new ASSIST applications. Both must be received in our office by the close of business, 5:00 pm Central Time.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Winter Preparedness

Winter is right around the corner. NIRMA receives numerous claims including workers comp, property damage, etc. from accidents related to snow and ice storms.

Road department employees work in all kinds of weather, but winter weather is the worst. There are slick roads, shop floors, and parking lots, etc. along with heavy lifting of tire chains, blades, etc. Employees deal with impatient taxpayers while plowing roads with heavy traffic, heavy snow, poor visibility, and terrible traction for their equipment. All this adds up to extra stress, injuries and accidents.

The best thing road department management can do in preparation for winter is to hold Snow Removal Safety meetings no later than the end of October. Making employees aware of the dangers of winter weather and snow removal will inform them of what can happen, not only to seasoned employees but especially to new employees. Safety training should be documented with minutes, sign-in sheets, etc. saved as well. Act on the safety concerns of your employees as soon as practical. NIRMA has developed an in-depth snow removal safety program that can be presented to your employees. Inform employees of their responsibilities including snow routes and the county's snow removal program. Prepare and send letters to the local newspaper explaining your snow removal policy and priority snow removal route maps, also copy emergency services, schools and sheriff's office. Good public relations are critical during this time.

The first part of October, or earlier, is the time to order salt and sand, if your county uses it. Equipment should be inspected for working condition and needed repairs, fuel filters changed, proper mix of anti-freeze in radiators, enough grader blades, plow blades/bolts and tire chains are in stock, sanders inspected and in good operating condition, snowplows inspected and ready to install, etc. If you wait until the middle of winter to order the aforementioned supplies and materials, vendors may be out of stock and it could be weeks before you receive the proper supplies to plow snow.

Instruct the road department employees to make a dry run of their snow routes prior to the first snow. They should inspect for objects the public may have left in county right-of-way, near the road, which could be covered by snow and hit by snow removal equipment. Again, thoroughly inspect your snow removal equipment, including plows and sanders, to ensure they are in good working order to prevent breakdowns during a snowstorm.

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Commitment is when you walk the walk. It's what makes safety practices meaningful rather than mechanical. It's what inspires employees to contribute personally to workplace safety. Building a commitment to safety has been shown to significantly reduce injuries in the workplace.



Winter Preparedness *continued*

Unfortunately, the public is not very forgiving when their roads are blocked, and they can't get to the coffee shop to complain about the county not getting their roads open.

Since the topic of snow removal safety is so broad, it would take numerous pages to cover every aspect in our monthly newsletter. Please let me know if you are interested in NIRMA presenting a Snow Removal Safety presentation in your county, would like to host a regional training in your county or would like the training via ZOOM. The training is for all road department employees, including management. Please let me know of any questions by contacting me at tim@nirma.info or 402-310-4417. Be Safe.



LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Committed to Safety

Earlier this year I wrote about line of duty deaths, and due to the recent tragic event that occurred this past month involving the death of Lincoln Police Investigator Luis "Mario" Herrera I thought while it was still fresh on our minds to revisit this topic.

Nebraska, as well as a law enforcement nation mourned the death of Lincoln Police Investigator Luis "Mario" Herrera who was shot on August 26 while members of the Metro Area Fugitive Task Force were serving a warrant on a house in Lincoln. Investigator Herrera passed away on September 7, 2020 from injuries he sustained after being shot. Two teenagers have been charged in connection with the murder of Investigator Herrera. Chris Cosgriff, Officer Down Memorial Page Founder quotes: "When a police officer is killed, it's not an agency that loses an officer, it's an entire nation".

So far in 2020, there have been 205 line of duty deaths, last year at this same time 147 officers had been killed in the line of duty. Everyone knows when they accept the responsibility of wearing a badge there are dangers that comes along with this chosen profession. Law enforcement officers face a variety of challenges and hazardous situations each day, but for most, the thought of no tomorrow never crosses their minds until events such as what happened in Lincoln hits a little closer to home.

By no means am I judging the actions of Investigator Herrera on that fateful day, I wasn't there, but when any law enforcement officer is injured or killed, one has to think that any law enforcement officer would reflect on the dangers of this job. But why do we wait and make a tragic event

We're on the Web

<https://nirma.info>

With the decision due to COVID-19 to cancel NIRMA's Self Defense for County Officials Conference that was scheduled October 1-2, in its place NIRMA will be sponsoring a series of free monthly webinars that will address many of the same timely and important subjects that were planned for the conference.

Our first seminar will be presented October 22 by attorney Pam Bourne who will address "The Work Environment After Coronavirus."

Check it out!

Committed to Safety *continued*

such as this before we think of the consequences? It's called complacency, it is habit forming, it effects every law enforcement officer over time causing us to become lax, contributing to critical errors of judgments which increases the probability of injury. Though I am not speculating this is what contributed to Investigator Herrera's death, it is however a contributing factor in many officer related injuries and fatalities.

Personnel who repeatedly are exposed to dangerous or violent situations become less concerned and cautious about their own personal safety, because nothing ever went wrong and all of a sudden the mentality developed is nothing bad is ever going to happen, and we get the feeling we are invincible.

So how do we avoid complacency once we have achieved our dream job? First thing is recharge your batteries daily, come to work with a goal of getting better at what you do, no matter how seasoned in this profession you are, strive for excellence. Remember there is no such thing as a routine call for service, each time we respond there is always the potential something could go wrong, always focus on the process at hand.

Below 100 was formed in 2010 to permanently eliminate preventable line of duty deaths and injuries through innovative training and awareness. The Mission: reduce line of duty deaths to fewer than 100 per year, something that has not been accomplished since 1943. The Vision: Eliminate preventable line of duty deaths and serious injuries through compelling common-sense training designed to focus on areas under an officer's control.

Below 100 five tenants, when it comes to officer safety:

- Always wear your seatbelt
- Always wear your vest
- Always watch you speed
- WIN-"What's Important Now"
- Remember: Complacency Kills

Commitment to safety begins with each officer taking responsibility for their working habits, but administrators should instill the importance of safety, constant awareness and ensure officers are always ready for the uncertainty. I had written a NIRMA Shorts article in January titled, Line of Duty Deaths, hoping that we saw a decrease in the number of law enforcement deaths, as well as to hopefully set a new benchmark for a reduction in the line of duty deaths, hopefully not to exceed 100, but based on the current 2020 law enforcement death stats, this goal is unattainable this year, but that doesn't mean we can't strive to reaffirm our commitment to making it happen beginning with 2021 as well as making sure no more deaths occur the rest of this year.

Those of you who remember the TV show Hill Street Blues (1981-1987), roll call always ending with Sgt. Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad) telling his officers, "Hey, Let's Be Careful Out There."

Safety starts with you, stay safe everyone!