

NIRMA's

Loss Prevention and
Safety Department
Monthly Newsletter

NIRMA's Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway & Law Enforcement

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October 2021

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October
Is
Positive
Attitude
Month

1. Give yourself the right to laugh and smile during hard times. Making others smile and laugh too.
2. Surround yourself with positive people. Negative thoughts are contagious, never forget that.
3. Maintain an active lifestyle. Exercise releases endorphins, which is a "happiness hormone."
4. Find at least 3 things to celebrate every day - or at least one!
5. See challenges for the growing experiences they are, not as failures.



HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Road Department Winter Preparedness

Winter weather and snow is right around the corner. NIRMA receives numerous claims including worker's compensation, 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, 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 of 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 October or the middle of November. Training road department employees on the dangers of snow removal and winter weather will make them more aware of what can happen, not only to seasoned employees but especially to new employees. Safety training should be documented with sign-in sheets saved as well. NIRMA has developed an in-depth snow removal safety program that can be presented to your employees.

Numerous vehicle accidents occur while plowing snow. One of the dangers is backing over vehicles which are following too close. Encourage your employees to always physically look back prior to backing while plowing snow. Don't rely solely on your back-up cameras, if your machine is so equipped. Install "Stay Back 100 ft." signs on the rear of your snow removal equipment. That distance is a state statute requirement, although most motorists are unaware of it. By installing the sign, it advises motorists of the statute. This also assists in defense of a claim should an accident occur, and a claim be filed. I have the info on these signs and the NIRMA ASSIST grant will help purchase them.

Do not allow employees to "wire" open the spring-loaded moisture relief valve on truck air tanks. This is not a good idea as the operator may forget the valve is wired open and drive the truck, without enough air pressure built up, resulting in no brakes. Most trucks won't move if air pressure is not properly built up, but malfunctions happen. Ensure moisture is drained from truck air tanks but do not wire the valve open. During walk around inspections, always ensure the valve is closed so air pressure can be properly built up to operate breaks effectively. Always use the proper air-line anti-freeze in trucks and equipment before cold weather sets in.

Road Department Winter Preparedness *continued*

Loss Prevention
and
Safety

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Think Safety

Safety is
everyone's
responsibility!

We're on the Web

<https://nirma.info>



Private citizens like to clean their private drives and property and push snow across county roads and deposit within county rights-of-way. This is especially dangerous after the county has cleared roads in front of their property. Pushing and depositing snow onto public rights-of-way after the county has cleared the road leaves windrows of snow, and in some cases the private citizens deposit snow off their private property directly onto the county road. Private citizens guilty of this practice can and will be named in a lawsuit should an accident be directly traced back to the private citizen's snow removal actions on the public road. A public notice and sample letter to landowners has been developed to address this serious liability issue. Contact me if you would like a copy.

Another safety concern in snow removal is brush and trees. Removing snow is very expensive so eliminating the causes of drifting snow is very beneficial. Any locations with brush and trees that can be removed, should be removed to eliminate drifting and hazards. Brush and trees cause drifting problems during snow events as well as cause severe sight distance concerns at intersections. Brush and trees in county rights-of-way should be dealt with the proper way in that adjacent landowners should be contacted and informed of the county's desire to remove said brush and trees due to liability and safety concerns. Contact landowners even though the trees and brush are on county right-of-way. This goes a long way in developing good public relations with the taxpayers. If brush and trees are not causing a liability or safety concern and are outside the clear zone, it may be best to leave as is to reduce public complaints. However, live and dead trees that are outside the clear zone and within public right-of-way are still a liability and safety issue if they fall across a public road where they can be hit by motorists.

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 or would like to host a regional training. The training is for all road department employees. Please let me know of any questions by contacting me at tim@nirma.info or 402-310-4417. Be Safe.



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Never stop
learning.

Knowledge
is power.

By

Amelia

Yoder

Don't miss out on
this outstanding
educational
program.



LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Officer Involved Shootings

When you accept the responsibilities of becoming a law enforcement officer, there are many tragic events you will experience throughout your career, but I would think the most traumatic event you could ever encounter would be being involved in an Officer-Involved Shooting (OIS).

Throughout my 30-year law enforcement career, I never had to fire my service weapon in the line of duty, I came close a few times, but my only exposure to Officer-Involved Shooting (OIS) involved being part of two separate post shooting investigations. One involved a Missouri Valley Police Officer and the other involved an Onawa Police Officer, both shootings resulted in fatal injuries to the suspects and both officers were justified in the use of deadly force.

Since becoming a part of NIRMA, I have experienced several more Officer-Involved Shootings that have occurred in our member counties, but this time my exposure relates to the risk management and loss prevention impact.

Something I came to realize from my own personal experience was that not only is the initial investigation critical, but also the health and well-being of the officer(s) involved. I know the immediate focus will gravitate toward the officer who pulled the trigger, rightfully so, but we cannot forget the impact it will have on the families as well as other officer(s). The one thing an agency can do, is make it very clear that you value the officer(s) involved and understand how difficult of time this is for them.

When a deadly force incident occurs, the aftermath and events that follow can form a series of unsettling events for all those involved. Not only from the incident itself, but the investigation, being placed on administrative leave, releasing the names of the officer(s) to the public, the media coverage and don't forget the Grand Jury.

Policy and training are essential when addressing officer involved critical events, making sure those involved understand the effects it will have on them personally, professionally, and especially through the legal process. Policy and training better prepare officers on how to respond and what is to be expected.

Some agencies provide legal representation to those officer(s) involved, but many of the smaller agencies do not and their resources are limited.

A stressful and confusing time for officer(s) is during the investigative process, as most worry about the legal and administrative ramifications. They simply want to know as soon as possible, the details and outcome of the shooting, but critical investigations take time which heightening the emotional stress on everyone.

October is also
National
Cybersecurity
Awareness
Month;
CISA,
Cybersecurity &
Infrastructure
Security Agency,

<https://www.cisa.gov/cybersecurity-awareness-month>

Remember,
*Stop. Think.
Connect.* and
#BeCyberSmart.
Stay protected
and protect your
piece of the
Internet.



Officer Involved Shootings *continued*

When it comes to Officer-Involved Shootings, I have always been on the outside looking in, and my experience recreated the encounter and actions that followed. I personally don't know what the officer was experiencing emotionally, oh I could see the look of concern, but I do know if the officer felt the need to use deadly force, they may have just survived a close call with death. That alone would have a significant impact to their emotions, not to mention everything else going through their minds.

In this line of work you already know things can change at the drop of a hat. How agencies respond to critical events will determine success or failure but remember agency response will also have a significant impact on the officer(s) involved as well as the officer's well-being.

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

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Proactive Winter Loss Prevention

As I write this month's article it is a balmy 94 degrees. Don't get too comfortable in your shorts and sandals though, the 10-day forecast has the highs down to 65° by the same time next week. With October here it is the perfect time to get prepared for the upcoming winter weather.

We've been doing this long enough to know that with each bout of snowfall comes multiple slip and fall injuries to our member employees and their customers. It is one of the less pleasant side effects of snow and ice. We can't simply resign ourselves to the fact that it's a part of living in Nebraska, while that may be true, we have a duty to protect our employees and customers from winter weather related hazards.

Prevention should be our initial focus. Timely and thorough snow removal is key. Our goal is to remove all snow from all walking and driving surfaces prior to our employee's arrival. If that is impossible, definitely prior to being open for business. If the snowfall continues throughout the day, so should the snow removal. If ice is an issue salt/sand/ice melt should be used on problem areas.

NIRMA recommends maintaining records of when snow removal started and when it was completed. Please document ongoing snow removal after the initial removal is complete. The use of salt/ sand

It is NIRMA's intent to dedicate additional resources each year through this grant/aid program to help fund and recognize the safety/risk management/loss control efforts of our members as a means to encourage activities designed to protect employees, prevent and control accidents, increase effectiveness of operations, control liability exposures, and reduce the frequency and severity of loss.



Proactive Winter Loss Prevention *continued*

/ice melt needs to be documented as well. This documentation should include the time it was applied, the location and how much was used. This information is invaluable for claims and defense staff if a claim is presented after an alleged fall due to ice or snow. All ongoing snow removal and additional application of salt/sand/ice melt should be documented as well.

When piling up snow it is best to pile it downhill and as far as practical from walking and driving paths, so that melting and refreezing snow doesn't cause additional slip hazards. The snow removal and salt/sand/ice melt process should be documented daily until the hazard is gone.

During snow fall it is also important to keep an eye on entrances, both inside and outside, to maintain them in as dry a condition as possible. Be prepared with additional rugs and mats so that they can be replaced when saturated. Courthouse floors are often tile or marble and can become very slippery when wet, it is recommended that these are mopped on a regular basis to keep them as dry as possible. "Caution Wet Floor" signs should be used to warn employees and customers of hazardous conditions. Remember to take them down once the floors are dry, don't leave them up throughout the entire winter season.

Investigate all reports of slip or trip and falls. Don't wait for a claim to be made. Conditions can change over a matter of hours, if we wait to take photos the incident scene could look totally different than it did at the time of the occurrence. Please check security footage and pull any video that would be useful in the investigation in addition to taking multiple photos. Remind all employees to notify the contact person or a member of the safety committee if an incident occurs, don't assume someone else will. There are accident investigation forms available at www.nirma.info to help you through the process.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the Claims or Loss Prevention Department. We'd be happy to walk you through the process. We can always be reached at 1.800.642.6671 or chad@nirma.info.

ASSIST Deadline Reminder

The ASSIST Program serves as an investment in our members' efforts to remain proactive in their safety, health and loss prevention programs. ASSIST is an acronym for award, scholarship, safety incentive and safety training. Each year members are invited to apply for funding assistance to pay for equipment, training or other initiatives intended to reduce losses.

Please keep in mind that the deadline for this year's ASSIST applications is Monday, November 1st, 2021, at 5:00 pm Central. The applications must be received by the deadline, not postmarked by the deadline.

The deadline for last year's ASSIST reimbursement requests is also Monday, November 1st, 2021, at 5:00 pm Central. Again, the reimbursement request must be received by the deadline, not postmarked by the deadline.