



July Is Eye Injury Prevention Month

Protecting your eyes from injury is one of the most basic things you can do to keep your vision healthy throughout your life.

Eye injuries make up nearly 45% of all head **injuries** that lead to missed work days. **Eye injuries** account for an estimated annual \$300 million in medical bills, compensation, and time off. Men ages 25-44 comprise 80% of all workplace **eye injury** victims.



July:
Eye Injury
Prevention Month

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

NIRMA Announces Updated Model Safety Manual

I am pleased to announce that NIRMA is now distributing an updated Model Safety Manual to our members. The previous version of the manual was published in 2007, so we were due for an update. Each member will receive three hard copies, one for the safety committee chair, one for the board chair and one for the contact person. It is also available for download on the Interact portal via www.nirma.info.

NIRMA Best Safety Practice for Counties number one is **Adopt an Effective Safety Manual**. The State of Nebraska also feels that a safety manual is important to a safety program as Neb. Rev. Stat. § 48-443 states "...every public and private employer subject to the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act shall establish a safety committee. Such Committee shall adopt and maintain an effective injury prevention program."

The updated manual is very similar in look and layout to the previous version. There are some language changes and updated references to standards and requirements. The tabs/chapters are the same as the earlier manual to facilitate adoption of the new manual.

The Model Safety Manual is intended to be personalized by each county or agency to fit their unique safety needs and policies. Once the manual has been personalized it should be adopted by the board. It is essential that the safety program is supported by the governing body of the county or agency.

I have already started distributing the manuals during my scheduled appointments and visits. My plan is to continue doing so up until the NIRMA Self Defense for County Officials Conference in October. Those who have not received theirs can pick them up then. If you would like to obtain your county or agency's copies of the manual sooner rather than later, please let me know and I can do my best to get it delivered.

As I mentioned, it is also available online. I can be reached at 1.800.642.6671 or chad@nirma.info.

We Believe in Keeping You Safe

Loss Prevention
and Safety

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The [Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act](#) of 2017 (LEMHWA) was signed into law in January 2018, recognizing that law enforcement agencies need and deserve support in their ongoing efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of their employees. Good mental and psychological health is just as essential as good physical health for law enforcement officers to be effective in keeping our country and our communities safe from crime and violence.



LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Mental Health and the Badge

In light of the tragic events that recently occurred in Sarpy County, I think it is important to stress how challenging, dangerous and draining situations can be on law enforcement, let alone the families who experience loss.

Protecting the public is a vital part of the job but other hazards are inherent in nature to the profession such as; exposure to death, grief, loss and pain. Law enforcement are veered as being tough and immune from health consequences as they are usually the first to arrive and last to leave a traumatic event. But law enforcement are well aware that critical incidents will come up and when they do, there must be a response. Its simply part of the job.

I know everyone reading this article whether you worked in the law enforcement arena, corrections or even as a first responders, on a local rescue unit or fire department, you too have seen things you never thought you would or wished you hadn't, as the vision never goes away and can stay with you for some time.

Every county has experienced some type of a critical incident involving a death and many of the critical events require law enforcement professionals to work long hours in unfamiliar and demanding circumstances. Not taking time away from the event, can lead to fatigue, mental distress, job dissatisfaction and health issues, so what steps to do you take for personnel once an event happens?

Anytime you deal with death scenes, there can easily be a higher probability of developing PTSD, depression, alcohol problems, anxiety and stress in the responders. I myself have witnessed and been involved in many death investigations, and to say I never was affected about what I saw at the scene, personally witnessed what victims, families go through would be an untrue statement.

When bad things effect an entire community, the community grieves, but what happens for law enforcement officer and first responders when the event is over? By providing critical incident stress debriefing services to personnel, this can easily help with their recovery and resiliency and the belief that they can cope with what they were just involved in.

It is tough to prepare an officer that will be responding to a disaster or mass trauma event, oh you train for the event, but what training is provided for the aftermath, when the event is all over. Make sure your county provides the necessary mental health services and counseling opportunities to those that may be greatly affected by the tragic events they are sworn to handle, to lessen the impact of the trauma, help them recover and if necessary get the extra help they need to cope with the tough crisis that changed their life from normal to chaotic.

For more information and training, contact Terry Baxter, 402-686-9332

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For the past 30 years, an average of 50 people have died annually from lightning strikes.

If a co-worker is struck by lightning. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, are safe to touch, and need urgent medical attention. Cardiac arrest is the immediate cause of death for those who die. Some deaths can be prevented if the victim receives the proper first aid immediately. Call 9-1-1 and perform CPR if the person is unresponsive or not breathing.



HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Lightning and Heavy Equipment

Numerous questions have been received as to the dangers of lightning occurring while operating heavy equipment, especially blading roads. The best policy is to NOT be operating heavy equipment while a thunderstorm is near where work will be performed. Management should monitor thunderstorm activity and not allow employees to perform road maintenance while thunderstorms are in the area. If thunderstorms are or will be entering your county, motor grader operators should close their windrows as soon as safely possible and head for the shop. When a storm moves nearby, don't start or continue any work that cannot be stopped immediately.

Following is information gleaned from several organizations including the National Weather Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and heavy equipment safety articles:

The electrical potential in a lightning strike can be as much as 100 million volts. Lightning strikes can occur over distances as great as 40 miles. Lightning travels both in front of and behind a thunderstorm, so strikes can occur before or after rain. Lightning can hit in the same place and often spreads out 60 feet over the soil around the strike point. Thunder always accompanies lightning. When lightning occurs, the air through which it travels is instantaneously heated to a temperature in excess of 50,000 °F. The air expands rapidly due to this heating, then quickly contracts as it cools. It is this contracting shock wave that we hear as thunder.

React promptly to weather advisories, don't hesitate, when lightning storms are in the area. Get employees off bridges and other projects where construction/maintenance is being performed, notify blade operators and other equipment operators to cease work activities and seek shelter.

Heavy equipment, with a fully enclosed rollover protective structure (ROPS), offers good protection against lightning. Should an electrical storm be very near and you are already inside a motor vehicle or fully enclosed ROPS equipment cab, stay inside. During close lightning, never attempt to step off the equipment to the ground. Should you do so, you establish a "dual pathway to the ground," which creates a very dangerous "step voltage" and "touch voltage" situation. In their attempt to equalize themselves, the lightning voltages may go right through you.

Shut down all operations, lift the blade or bucket off the ground, turn off the engine and close the doors and windows. Sit squarely in the seat with your hands in your lap and feet flat on the floor mat. Do not touch any metallic objects referenced to the outside of the vehicle including door and window handles, control levers, foot pedals, the steering wheel and cab interior walls. Do not touch radios or telephones connected to an outside antenna.

Open excavation equipment is **NOT** safe from lightning. Immediately exit open and/or tracked equipment and seek shelter in a pickup or building.

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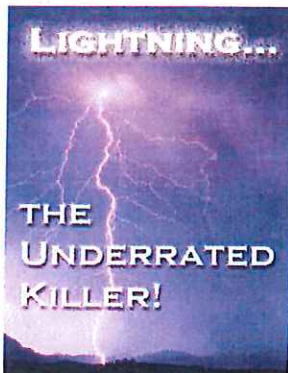
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if you have any

questions.

Be Safe.



Lightning and Heavy Equipment *continued*

Remember, rubber tires on motor vehicles and heavy equipment do not increase safety from lightning strikes. Lightning has already traveled a great distance through the air to strike the vehicle. In comparison, a few inches of rubber offer absolutely no additional insulation.

If you are working outside and feel a tingling sensation or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down and cover your ears.

Here are a few guidelines for protecting road department employees from death and injury in thunderstorms:

Create a Lightning Safety Policy: Add a section on lightning safety for construction/maintenance crews to your road department safety manual. Make sure all employees review the policy. Insist they promptly follow the measures recommended when a thunderstorm approaches the job site.

Keep an Eye on the Sky: Awareness of changing weather conditions is the first line of defense. Management and employees should watch weather reports each morning. Weather alert apps for smart phones keep management and employees advised of impending thunderstorms well in advance.

React Promptly to Weather Advisories: Resist the temptation to finish the job in progress before taking shelter. Do not wait until you see lightning or rain. By the time you hear the thunder, you are already in striking distance of the lightning— even if the storm appears several miles away.

Take Shelter in a Building: Get all employees into a safe shelter. Close all doors and windows. Stay in the center of the structure, away from windows, exterior doors, electrical wiring, and plumbing. Do not allow workers to bunch together in a tight group. Keep some space between crew members. NEVER take shelter in an open-sided building. Avoid small shelters, sheds, and storage buildings, which provide little protection from lightning.

Take Shelter in a Vehicle: If no building at the site is safe, have employees stay in their pickups or equipment during the storm. Do not park near trees, electrical poles, metal fences, scaffolding, or other tall objects.

Avoid rolling down windows, touching electronic equipment like the radio, or leaning on the metal doors of the vehicle.

Wait: Stay in your secure location for 30 minutes after the storm has passed.

NIRMA recommends a thunderstorm and lightning safety meeting be held with all road department employees each spring just prior to storm season to remind them of the dangers of lightning and working during thunderstorms. Short tailgate talks throughout the storm season is another good reminder of the dangers of lightning. Much more safety information is available in addition to this short safety newsletter and should be presented at your safety meeting.

Again, management and employees should be watching for thunderstorm activity at all times and notify fellow employees to seek shelter.