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Cedar Co Highway Dept

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March Is National Nutrition Month

National Nutrition Month® is a time to promote the benefits of eating a healthy diet and actions people can take to make healthy living easier. Helping to gain access to healthy foods and encourage small changes to daily routines can make a big difference for overall health.



GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Seat Belts, How Can You Justify Not Wearing One?

Here at NIRMA there is an excellent line of communication between the claims department and the loss prevention department. When they see a pattern or trend developing, they are quick to reach out and let us know. This is a great benefit for our members as we can go to work on an issue before it has become too big to control.

The last topic of discussion between claims and loss prevention was seat belts. We have discovered that seat belt policies are not as common as they should be, and many counties have employees that choose not to follow them while management looks the other way.

The laws are quite clear on seat belts. Seat belts are required to be worn by the driver and front seat passenger per Nebraska Revised Statute. If you have employees operating a commercial motor vehicle the Department of Transportation requires the use of seat belts as well.

Statistics show that seat belts are the single most effective thing a driver can do to protect themselves in a crash. Being buckled up keeps you inside your vehicle; being ejected from a vehicle is almost always deadly.

Per the Centers for Disease Control, seat belt use reduces serious injuries and deaths by about 50%!

There is no logical argument to justify *not* using a seat belt. They are fast, free and effective.

Here is what I'm asking of our members. Let your employees know that there is a seat belt policy if there in fact is one. Let them know that it is real, it will be enforced, and it is because we care about them and their families. If your county or agency does not have a seat belt policy, adopt one, now. Let your employees know that you have done so and let them know it will be enforced, because you care about them and their families.

Once the policy is in place, take the time to do some follow-up checks on employees that drive county or agency owned vehicles. If they are spotted wearing their seat belt, shower them with praise, positive reinforcement is incredibly effective. If they are spotted not following the policy, sit them down and counsel them on the policy and why they should be. It is company policy and we care about them.

I think that this is a situation where people behave in a manner that they feel is acceptable to their supervisor. We need to make it clear that it is not acceptable to *not* wear a seat belt when operating a county or agency vehicle.

Loss Prevention
and
Safety

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HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By Tim Baxter, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Utility Permits

NIRMA continues to receive tens of thousands of dollars of claims from utility companies involving county maintenance and construction damage to underground utilities in county right-of-way.

The recent NIRMA internal road department assessments, of all 82 member counties, shows that only 34 of the 82 member counties, or 41%, have a good, comprehensive Utility Permit Program. That leaves 48 member counties with either sub-standard or absolutely no utility permit program. No wonder utility damage claims are so high.

It is imperative counties have an up to date Utility Permit program, including liability insurance, and that permits are required prior to ANY utility or other outside work in county rights-of-way. Utility companies many times hire sub-contractors to install telecommunication lines with no supervision whatsoever. The county, to ensure proper burial depth of utilities and other compliance to the county permit, should require a county road department employee to periodically inspect the work of the contractors to ensure proper depth, and other utility permit compliance.

Without a county inspector, the contractor can and will cut corners to quickly install the utility resulting in improper burial depth of utilities thereby resulting in damage from county equipment. If your utility permit is properly developed, the minimum depth of bury should be thirty-six (36) inches beneath the road surface, and if installed at that depth, normal maintenance would not damage the utility.

County road department management and employees need to be taking photos of the marked lines prior to beginning work to ensure the lines are marked properly and photos should be taken of any cut lines to show that they were either not marked or were not deep enough according to permit requirements.

State law requires 48 hours' notice to diggers hotline of any construction work, outside regular county maintenance, and you cannot begin construction until the 48 hours is up, and all lines have been marked. If lines are not marked or you have questions, contact the utility company prior to digging.

This is a serious issue and needs to be addressed. All county employees should be required to contact diggers hotline 48 hours prior to any construction activity.

The county board should adopt an updated Utility Permit, NIRMA has a sample, and road department management needs to ensure permits are issued for ANY county ROW use, outside county maintenance and construction. Failure to adopt a good Utility Permit program, and to ensure compliance to said permit, will continue to open the county to unnecessary claims and payment of those claims.

NIRMA needs assistance from you if we are going to successfully defend you in utility damage claims filed against the county. Help us help you to reduce claims of this type. If counties do nothing to reduce claims, then we have virtually no defense to argue, hence we pay the claim, settlement, lawsuit, etc.

If you would like me to present Utility Permit Program training to your county board, highway superintendent and road department, etc., please let me know and I will work it into my schedule.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 402-310-4417 or tim@nirma.info. Be Safe.

Loss Prevention
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We're on the Web

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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Terry Baxter, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Bloodborne Pathogens

Within the workplace, bloodborne pathogens can be spread easily through a number of different ways. They can be transferred through blood or other infectious fluids, touching eyes, nose or mouth. They can be spread through cuts, abrasions, rashes or burns. Exposures also can occur through semen, vaginal secretions and other body tissues or fluids that contain visible blood. You can be contaminated through touching contaminated areas, being punctured or wounding the skin allowing access to your bloodstream.

It is important to note, that anyone who experiences an exposure may not always show any signs or symptoms, so it is essential that all persons you deal with in the workplace environment be considered infectious. Law enforcement and correction officers work in an atmosphere where the potential of a person they are dealing with has an infectious disease. The three major bloodborne pathogens of concern are:

- Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)
- Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)
- Human Immunodeficient Virus (HIV)

HBV- is a definite risk. HBV can survive on environmental surfaces in dried blood for at least one (1) week. There is a vaccine for HBV.

HCV- is efficiently transmitted through exposures. HCV is the leading indicator for liver transplants and there is no vaccine for HCV.

HIV- is a virus that gradually breaks down the immune system leaving the body unable to defend itself against other viruses. It cannot live outside the body very long.

County exposure policies and training can greatly decrease chances of employees being exposed. Procedures and training should identify methods for handling suspected contaminations as well as cleaning up affected areas.

Policy should dictate to treat all body fluids as though they are infectious and ensure staff are properly provided and wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Disposable gloves are the most common type of PPE, but equipment that is appropriate should be utilized depending on the exposure at hand.

Handwashing is the single most important precaution for preventing the spread of infections, staff should be trained to wash their hands before and after every handling contact. If you have handwashing solution this should only be an temporary measure and once water and soap is available to wash hands and exposed areas as soon as possible.

Should an exposure occur, immediately wash the area with soap and water, or flush the eyes with large amounts of water, report exposure

Loss Prevention
and
Safety



Dates and Locations

April 8 - Norfolk
Divots Conference
Center

April 9 - Lincoln
Champions Club

April 15 - Gering
Civic Center

April 16 - Ogallala
Haythorn Ranch

April 17 - Kearney
Holiday Inn
Convention Center

**Register on-line
beginning on
March 2nd**

www.nirma.info



Bloodborne Pathogens *continued*

to your supervisor and include a report of documentation outlining how the event occurred and the precautions, if any were taken.

Your county needs to have a policy addressing bloodborne pathogens, but the policy itself is not enough, training personnel is essential for limiting the risk of unwanted exposures. Just because you come in contact with an infectious disease doesn't mean infection will occur, but that being said this, should not deter someone from using the necessary precautions outlined in agency policy.

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



Attend NIRMA's Spotlight Seminar Series. This is a valuable resource to help you follow the right road and avoid getting into trouble.

Learn how you can be an official whose standard of conduct is beyond reproach and who is part of the foundation for sustainable and productive county government.

NIRMA's Spotlight Seminar Series will focus on what life as a public official involves.

Attend one of NIRMA's seminars in April.