



SAFETY MATTERS

A Newsletter of Hamilton County Human Resources -
Division of Risk Management

Risk
Management
& Safety

May 2014

Volume 1, Number 4

news & notes

Risk Management & Safety Committee

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at 10:00am in the Safety & Security Office, Room 628 of the Courthouse.

The purpose of this committee is to bring representatives of the various agencies, departments, and elected officials of Hamilton County together to collaborate on ways to promote a safe environment for employees and the public, and to develop ways to reduce risk to our people, property, and assets.

Did you know....

Emergency evacuation and sheltering floor plans can be found on the County intranet (HCNet). To locate yours, go to the link below. Then click on the **'Locate the Evacuation Diagram for my floor'** link to find your building and floor location.

Click [HERE](#)

A few things you should know:

- o Your dept. emergency plan
- o Emergency exit locations
- o Emergency Shelter locations
- o Your Emergency Floor Coordinators (or wardens)
- o Your assembly locations
- o Emergency contact numbers

Report on State and Local Government Employee Injuries

Local Government Employees have Highest Injury Rate

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) recent report shows that *state and local government employees experienced higher injury and illness rates* than their private sector counterparts. State and local government workers made up only 14.6% of the employees covered in the BLS's 2011 survey data, but accounted for 21.6% of the injury and illness cases that year. According to the BLS, *the difference was driven primarily by local government workers*, who made up 10.8% of the employees in the survey but 16.8% of the injury and illness cases. Below are some key findings:

State government

- State employees experienced 4.6 nonfatal injury and illness cases per 100 full-time workers — higher than the private industry rate of 3.5 but lower than that of local government.
- Similarly, state government workers' rate of injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work (1.8 cases per 100 full-time workers) was higher than private industry (1.1 cases).
- For state workers, workplace violence is of particular concern: it was responsible for 23.4% of cases resulting in days away from work, compared to 11.8% among local government workers and just 3.7% in private industry. The BLS hypothesized that the greater prevalence of workplace violence among state government workers may be due to a higher concentration of state workers in occupations that experienced high rates of violence, such as psychiatric aides.

Local government

- With 6.1 recordable injury and illness cases per 100 full-time workers, local government experienced nearly twice the nonfatal injury and illness rate of private sector employees.
- Nearly 4 in 10 of the injury and illness cases among local government workers occurred among elementary and secondary school workers, resulting in an incidence rate of 5.0 cases per 100 full-time workers in this industry.
- In the fire prevention and police protection fields, the injury and illness rates were the highest of any local government industry, at 13.5 and 11.3 cases per 100 full-time workers, respectively
- Fire protection workers in local government were over 4 times more likely than all government workers to suffer a workplace injury or illness requiring days away from work, and twice as likely to experience respiratory illnesses.

news & notes

Safety & Security Team

The Safety and Security team helps provide safety and loss prevention expertise in support of all County Departments and Elected Officials. Our goal is to help develop and implement safety and security programs that protect the assets of the County including people and property as part of the overall Risk Management Program.

We are committed to preventing fatalities, injuries, illness, and disabilities on the job and promoting a culture of safety within the County. The protection of our County assets and maintenance of a safe and healthy operating environment is essential for productivity and excellence in our services to the County community.

How can we help you...

Call us anytime should you have questions regarding safety, security or environmental concerns. We are also ready to help and provide:

- o Safety Awareness & Education Training (in person or online)
- o Safety Inspections
- o Security Assessments and Recommendations
- o Accident and Near Miss Investigations
- o Emergency Planning and plan development
- o Written safety programs and procedures
- o Technical guidance and support (safety questions regarding you, your department, or your staff)
- o Regulatory Compliance Assistance
- o Safety Committee support (we can help you start one and/or attend yours for support)

Contact Rodney Lofland
(513) 946-5059
rodney.lofland@hamilton-co.org

Near Misses Are Real Issues

Report and investigate them

Near misses are accidents that almost happened or accidents that did happen but that did not cause injury or damage. Near misses are also sometimes called "close calls" because the difference between a near miss and an accident could be a fraction of an inch or a split second.

According to the National Safety Council, 75 percent of all workplace accidents are preceded by one or more near misses. With that startling statistic in mind, treat near misses as warnings that an accident is likely to occur. Just because you narrowly avoided a disaster this time doesn't mean that you are safe and that the same situation couldn't cause an accident and injury next time.

Injuries can be prevented by paying attention to near misses and taking them seriously as safety incidents that require immediate attention. Here's how to respond effectively to near misses:

- If you can safely eliminate the hazard that caused the near miss, do so immediately.
- Report all near misses to your supervisor right away, even if you have removed the hazard.
- Never dismiss a near miss as just a lucky break and forget about it.
- Explain to your supervisor what happened, when it happened, which equipment or materials were involved, who was involved, and what you think caused the incident.
- Cooperate in investigations of near misses; don't worry about being blamed.

Near-miss reporting part of a strong safety culture

Near-miss reporting is an important piece of a strong safety culture. It is also a way to get our organization here at the County talking about safety in general. Investigating near misses is *proactive* - preventing accidents before they occur rather than waiting for losses to happen before taking steps to prevent a recurrence.

As noted above, near miss incidents often precede loss producing events. Unfortunately, they may be overlooked as there was no harm (no injury, damage or loss). Your department may not have a reporting culture where employees are encouraged to report these close calls. Thus, many opportunities to prevent the incidents are lost. History has shown repeatedly that most loss producing events (incidents), both serious and catastrophic, were preceded by warnings or near miss incidents. Recognizing and reporting near miss incidents can significantly improve worker safety and enhance the County's safety culture.

For more information, check out this article from the National Safety Council on setting up near-miss reporting systems:

Near Miss Reporting Systems - [CLICK HERE](#)

news & notes

How Fit Are You?

How to pump up the exercise

May is **National Physical Fitness and Sports Month**, so this is a good time to take a look in the mirror and decide how fit you are. If you don't like what you see, it's time to get more exercise into your life. Here are some common excuses for not exercising and suggestions for getting past them.

- **I'm too busy.** You don't have to set aside a lot of time. Even chores and family recreational activities provide exercise. You can also build in exercise when doing errands by walking or riding a bike instead of driving. Or take the stairs and park at the far end of parking lots. It's not so hard to squeeze a little more physical activity into every day.
- **I'm too tired after a hard day at work.** Exercise before work or break your workout into three 10-minute segments each day.
- **Exercise is boring.** Pick an activity you like. Even dancing and gardening are good exercise.
- **I just can't get motivated.** Work out with a friend, spouse, or co-worker. Set yourself a goal, like training for a charity walk-a-thon or road race.
- **I'm too out-of-shape to exercise.** Start slow and easy and build up gradually. See your doctor first if you haven't exercised in a long time, are carrying a lot of extra weight, or have a medical condition.

Your office may be more hazardous than you realize

What could be unsafe about your office? After all, there's no heavy equipment—just desks, chairs, and computers. But what about the frayed electric cords, the teetering pile of materials stacked in a corner, and that file cabinet people keep tripping over?



Maybe it's time for an office safety reality check. Take a look and make note of areas in need of improvement in your office:

- Review your office emergency action plan or evacuation plan—employees need to know where to go if a building evacuation or shelter-in-place emergency alarm is sounded.
- Check your electrical wires for office desk equipment and other equipment. Make sure extension cords are not being used as permanent wiring connections. Power strips or surge protectors should be plugged directly into a floor or wall outlet.
- Check electrical outlets and power cord plugs to make sure they are not damaged and that wires are kept within the box.
- Check bathroom outlets near the sink and in other wet areas to make sure electrical outlets have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) at these locations.
- If your office has an electrical panel board with circuit breakers, make sure the area in front of the panel is kept clear with no obstructions. That way, the circuit breakers can be reached quickly in an emergency to kill power to a given circuit.
- If you use a portable fan, make sure it is equipped with a fan blade guard with openings of a half-inch or less in diameter.
- Keep power cords, wires, and phone cables from running across or through a walkway, exit route, or under carpets.
- Secure all carpets and rugs to prevent slips and trips.
- Check to see that open file cabinet drawers do not block a walkway. Also, don't leave file cabinet drawers open and make sure that heavy items are kept on the bottom.
- Store overhead materials in a secure manner. Any storage shelving must be secured to the wall or another means of preventing it from falling on someone.

For more information, check out this article on [Recognizing hidden dangers: 25 steps to a safer office](#)

Did you know...

The BWC will inspect public sector workplaces when requested by an employee, an employee representative, or employer; OR when notified by an employee of his or her refusal to work under dangerous conditions; OR such times as the administrator of the BWC directs.

Code: **Public Sector Employer** OAC 4167-8-01

news & notes

Preventing Workplace Violence

Why It Matters...

- One-sixth of violent crimes occur in the workplace.
- There are over 1.5 million incidents a year.
- As many as 18,000 people are assaulted at work each week.
- Violence is the third-leading cause of workplace deaths. More than 600 workers die each year.
- Guns are involved in 80 percent of workplace deaths.
- Violence costs American industry millions in lost productivity, legal fees, and other related expenses every year.
- Violent incidents often have a long-term impact on employees, who may feel distressed and insecure for months after an incident.

Contact us:

Paul Allen
Risk Manager
(513) 946-4322
paul.allen@hamilton-co.org

Todd Beekley, ARM
Worker's Compensation Specialist
(513) 946-4703
todd.beekley@hamilton-co.org

Rodney Lofland, CSP
Safety & Security Manager
(513) 946-5059
rodney.lofland@hamilton-co.org

Steve Sears
Safety & Security Specialist
(513) 946-5098
steve.sears@hamilton-co.org

Be Aware of the Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Employee violence continues to plague American workplaces.

Just a few months ago, a fired utility company worker shot his way into his supervisor's office and killed himself there. The employee had been fired earlier that day after working for the company for 28 years. In this incident the employee turned his gun on himself. Usually it's a supervisor and co-workers who are gunned down.

How do you know when an employee will resort to violence?

You can never be sure, but you should always keep your eyes open for signs. People rarely commit a violent act 'out of the blue,' and people don't 'just snap.' A violent act is almost always preceded by a number of warning signs or changes in behavior. Here's an abbreviated list of possible warning signs:

- Veiled or open threats of violence
- Irritability, belligerence, or hostility
- Excessive focus on guns or boasting of weapons collections
- Changes in behavior—deterioration of work performance or becoming inappropriately withdrawn, increasingly angry, agitated, or out of touch with reality
- A resumption or escalation of drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Reacting with great stress to workplace events such as layoffs, discharges, demotions, etc.
- Blaming others or holding grudges
- Depression, paranoia
- "In your face" behavior
- A history of violent, reckless, or antisocial behavior
- References to or identification with mass murderers and infamous incidents of workplace violence

Use caution and good judgment in evaluating troubling

employee behavior. Even if an employee displays one or more of these signs, it doesn't mean that he or she will necessarily become violent. Some of these signs may be symptoms of other problems—emotional, financial, family, or personal. Always use good judgment when evaluating the behavior of others. Try to talk to the employee before things get out of hand. If that fails, consult with mental health experts from our Employee Assistance Program or an outside healthcare resource. But whatever you do, don't wait for violence to erupt before you act.