



Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

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April is Women's Eye Health and Safety Month

April is Women's Eye Health and Safety Month. Did you know that more women suffer from visual impairments than men? Two thirds of blindness occur in women.

Two out of every three people living with blindness or vision problems are women, according to the National Eye Institute. And, data from The Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Costs of Vision Problems study shows that women are at higher risk for certain eye diseases and conditions.

Women have a higher prevalence of major vision problems, including Age-related Macular Degeneration, Autoimmune diseases, cataracts, dry eye, glaucoma, low vision, thyroid eye disease, and refractive error.

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Manager

April Showers Bring What?

We all know the saying about April showers bringing May flowers. Spring showers also bring the chance of severe weather and water damage to member buildings. So, let's discuss action steps to prevent water damage claims or reduce the severity of the damage associated with them.

NIRMA's Best Safety Practices for Members Number 8 states: "Perform regular documented inspections of all workplace sites." Workplace inspections are important for multiple reasons. These include identifying hazards and developing a history of good property maintenance. Specifically, they can help identify maintenance issues before they lead to costly water damage.

When discussing with members what a "regular" inspection looks like, I often advise that the best option for frequency is quarterly. The next best option and probably the lower limit would be twice per year. Inspecting property in the spring and fall lets us put eyes on things prior to spring and summer storms and then again before snow and ice accumulates on roofs. Making repairs prior to exposure to severe weather is paramount.

Below is a list of items to be certain to cover during your spring building inspections:

- Hail guards installed on ground HVAC equipment
- Door and window seals in serviceable condition
- Check ceilings and walls for signs of water damage and repair cause

- Cracks in walls and floors sealed
- Exterior drains cleared of debris and functioning
- Inspect all safely accessible roofs
- Ensure rooftop equipment is securely fastened
- No missing screws or connectors on equipment housing or straps
- Satellite dishes properly secured
- All flashing, shingles and gutter system are secure
- Gutter system is clear of obstructions
- All debris and clutter removed from roof, nothing stored on roof
- No signs of hail damage
- Hail guards installed on roof-mounted HVAC equipment
- Skylights are rated for hail impact
- No standing water on roof
- Roof scuppers and drains clear and draining freely
- No sign of cracks or punctures in roof or caulking
- No loose roof panels
- No daylight seen from the interior below the roof
- Lightning conductors and grounding electrodes intact and connected
- Lightning conductors and components are fastened securely to their mounting surfaces and are protected against accidental mechanical displacement

Going to the effort of inspecting your buildings and making repairs prior to severe weather is a simple and cost-effective way to prevent or greatly reduce the risk of and the severity of wind, hail and water damage. In this instance, an ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure. If you have questions or need guidance when performing building inspections, you can find NIRMA's Building/Property Inspection Checklist here: [Inspection Forms and Checklists - NIRMA](#).

As always, I can be reached at chad@nirma.info or 1.800.642.6671.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Todd Duncan, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Body Worn Cameras, an Essential Risk Management Tool

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) have become an essential tool in law enforcement, providing significant benefits in risk management and loss prevention. These devices enhance accountability, transparency, and operational efficiency, reducing liability and financial risks associated with law enforcement activities.

From a risk management perspective, BWCs serve as a critical tool in documenting interactions between officers and the public. The recorded footage provides an objective account of incidents, reducing disputes and mitigating false claims of misconduct. This transparency not only protects officers from unfounded allegations but also fosters public trust. Moreover, BWCs promote adherence to department policies and legal standards, ensuring that officers conduct themselves professionally and ethically.

In terms of loss prevention, BWCs help minimize costly lawsuits and settlements arising from alleged excessive force or civil rights violations. By providing clear evidence in legal proceedings, these devices can expedite case resolutions, leading to fewer protracted legal battles and lower associated costs. Additionally, the presence of BWCs can deter aggressive behavior from both officers and civilians, reducing the likelihood of confrontations that may result in injuries or property damage.

Furthermore, BWCs enhance training and operational efficiency. By reviewing footage, law enforcement agencies can identify areas for improvement, refine training programs, and develop best practices that minimize risk exposure. The ability to analyze real-life scenarios provides invaluable insights that help officers handle high-risk situations more effectively. NIRMA strongly recommends that all sheriff's offices equip their personnel with BWCs. While doing so can require significant investment, experience has shown that the benefits far outweigh the cost. One potential area of funding to offset the cost of purchasing BWCs is the NIRMA ASSIST Grant program. More information on this program is available under the Services tab on NIRMA's website.

Agencies are reminded that if they have or are planning to deploy body worn cameras, they must have a BWC policy. Model policies are available through NIRMA and the Nebraska Crime Commission.

Overall, the implementation of body-worn cameras is a proactive measure in mitigating risks and preventing financial losses. By improving transparency, accountability, and officer performance, BWCs play a crucial role in modern law enforcement risk management strategies, ultimately leading to safer communities and reduced liabilities for sheriff's offices.

For questions or more information on training opportunities, contact NIRMA's Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist Todd Duncan at (402) 742-9220 or tduncan@nirma.info.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By K C Pawling, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist Managing Loss Potential with Equipment Operation Training

The efficient and safe operation of equipment is critical to the success of any county or business. Most of us know that equipment plays a pivotal role in daily operations of the county road department and even the janitorial or groundskeeping staff at the courthouse. Sometimes the road department equipment is used for maintenance activities, or snow removal at the courthouse. However, the value of that equipment can only be fully realized when operators are trained. Equipment operation training is not just about learning how to use machinery; it's a practice that ensures: 1) Safety, 2) Maximum Productivity, and 3) Optimal Longevity of Assets.

Safety

One of the primary reasons for investing in equipment operation training is to ensure the safety of employees. Improper use of machinery is a leading cause of workplace injuries, which can be severe or even fatal. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), nearly 20% of workplace fatalities are caused by heavy machinery accidents. A well-trained operator is equipped with the knowledge to use equipment safely, follow established protocols, and react appropriately in emergency situations. Training programs teach employees how to identify potential hazards, wear necessary PPE, and maintain a safe working environment. With the right skills, employees are less likely to cause accidents that could harm themselves, coworkers, or damage the equipment. For example, if employees are familiar but not necessarily proficient with the operation of the equipment, they can better understand the blind spots of the operator in the machine. This allows them to work more safely as part of the crew's ground team, staying out of those low-visibility areas.

Productivity

In addition to safety, equipment operation training plays a significant role in boosting productivity. When workers are trained, they can use machinery more efficiently, reducing downtime and minimizing errors. Operators who understand the full capabilities of the equipment they use can maximize its output, perform tasks faster, and troubleshoot minor issues without waiting for mechanics. This can reduce delays and contribute to smoother operation, which directly contributes to increased overall productivity. Additionally, trained operators are more likely to follow the best practices and configure the equipment settings to get the most out of it, leading to greater performance and efficiency. Many of the new machines have electric over hydraulic controls which can be set differently for different operators and their skill level or a setting for specific tasks.

Newer machines can also be set with specific limits of operation, for example an excavator can have a depth of cut set, not allowing an operator to over-dig a cut or trench. Some excavators can also have a ceiling set to limit the height an operator can lift the boom and stick, which ends overreaching when loading trucks or even making working under powerlines safer.

Equipment Lifespan

Proper training also contributes to the longevity of the equipment itself. Most machines require regular maintenance and care to function at peak capacity. Operators who are familiar with the necessary maintenance procedures, such as cleaning, lubrication, and proper storage, are more likely to prevent premature wear and possibly detect early signs of mechanical problems. Well-maintained equipment not only runs more efficiently but also has a longer lifespan, which

helps counties avoid costly repairs and replacements. Training programs should also include how to handle equipment properly under different conditions, ensuring that it is not overused or subjected to unnecessary stress, which can lead to premature breakdowns and safety incidents.

Other Considerations

In many industries, equipment operation is regulated by government agencies, and businesses must adhere to strict safety standards. OSHA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other regulatory bodies often mandate that employees undergo formal training on equipment operation. Not following these regulations can result in fines, legal action, or even the suspension of operations. Even when the standards developed by these entities do not technically apply to local government operations, compliance is still recommended. Investing in thorough training programs that teach how to comply with these standards will ensure that counties avoid potential safety incidents and equipment damage. Moreover, proper documentation of employee training can serve as evidence of compliance, in case of an audit or inspection.

In conclusion, equipment operation training is not merely a best practice but a necessity in county workplaces. It ensures the safety of employees, improves operational efficiency, extends the lifespan of equipment, and helps counties follow industry regulations which represent valuable safety recommendations. As machinery continues to evolve and becomes more complex, the need for skilled, knowledgeable operators will only increase. By prioritizing training programs, counties can unlock the full potential of their equipment, employees, reduce costs, and support safe and productive working environments for all.

If there is anything I can help you with, do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at 402-310-4417 or kcpawling@nirma.info.