



# Safety Shorts

## General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

August 2024

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Volume 12, Number 8

### August is National Traffic Awareness Month

According to the World Health Organization, every year 1.3 million people are fatalities by road traffic crashes which are also the leading cause of death for children and young adults ages 5-29. These statistics are tragic. National Traffic Awareness Month, observed each August, aims to reduce those fatalities by increasing our awareness of traffic safety rules. What are some important traffic safety rules?

- Be aware of your surroundings. If everyone on or near a road is aware of what is going on around them then accidents are less likely to occur.
- Practice safe driving habits. Checking your blind spot, using your turn signals, and not speeding all prevent accidents and contribute to safer roads.
- Don't drive distracted. Distracted driving is defined as engaging in another activity while driving.
- The most common form of distracted driving is texting while driving but other examples are eating while driving, distractions from other passengers, adjusting the GPS or radio, and essentially anything that pulls your focus away from the road.

For more information: <https://topdriver.com/education-blog/what-is-national-traffic-awareness-month/>

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS**

**By Todd Duncan, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist**

#### **Training, A Risk Management and Loss Prevention Imperative**

When it comes to risk management and loss prevention, few things are more important than regular, documented training. Whether it is online, in the classroom, or simply a quick coaching conversation with a team member, training is essential to the success of every organization. Training is often viewed simply as a part of the orientation process for new employees. The reality is, employee knowledge, skills, and abilities are perishable, and without regular, ongoing training, performance is likely to suffer.

Having a formalized training plan is essential for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, law enforcement officers and jail staff work in high-risk environments where mistakes can be very costly, even deadly. One of the primary means of ensuring safety for employees and the public is to provide staff with the training they need to maintain competency in high-risk critical tasks (see below).

Training impacts employee morale, recruiting, and retention. Employees want to be successful at work, and one of the best ways to make that happen is to invest in their development and growth by providing ongoing training opportunities. Agencies with reputations for developing

staff to their full potential and offering regular, meaningful training attract more quality candidates for employment.

Inadequate training can form the basis for civil rights violation claims against counties when the failure to train amounts to deliberate indifference to the rights of citizens. For example, policy makers within the sheriff's office or jail know with certainty that at some point, their officers will be required to use force to control resistive or combative subjects in the course of their duties. Accordingly, counties equip their officers with tools such as firearms, electronic control devices, safety restraint chairs, and chemical weapons to allow them to respond to these situations. Therefore, an argument can be made that the need to train officers in the constitutional limitations on the use of force is obvious, and failure to do so would demonstrate deliberate indifference to the constitutional rights of citizens.

Training is also necessary to comply with various legal mandates. Nebraska Revised Statute [81-1414.07](#) and [state accreditation requirements](#) require law enforcement officers to attend a minimum of 32 hours of continuing education in the areas of criminal justice and law enforcement each year including:

- Refresher courses on de-escalation, mental health, and substance abuse issues;
- A minimum of two hours of anti-bias and implicit bias training;
- Firearms;
- Officer wellness;
- Legal updates, including, but not limited to, legislative changes and First Amendment and Fourth Amendment issues;
- Vehicular pursuit policy review; and
- Any other training as determined by a law enforcement agency

Similarly, Chapter 2 of the [Nebraska Jail Standards](#) sets forth minimum standards of training for jailers and states that, "facilities shall have an organized training program that is planned and coordinated by a designated employee. Training shall be based on, and consistent with the facility's written policies and procedures and these Standards." The Standards go on to state that training shall include:

- Facility orientation and training
- Completion of state-approved basic jail training
- Minimum of 18 hours of annual in-service training
- Basic first aid and CPR training within first year of employment (certification must be kept current)

With so many competing priorities facing today's law enforcement and jail leaders, where does one start when evaluating the effectiveness of an agency's training programs? One option is to consider the following questions:

- Have all employees completed basic certification requirements established by the state?
- Is there a written onboarding orientation and training checklist for new employees?
- Are new officers and jailers required to successfully complete a structured field training officer (FTO) or corrections training officer (CTO) program?
- Have all employees been trained and/or certified in specialized equipment or tools such as chemical sprays, electronic control devices, less lethal munitions, safety restraint chairs, pepper ball launchers, tire deflation devices, etc.?
- Is there a written annual training plan to ensure all employees complete annual refresher training on the 12 high-risk critical tasks listed below?
- Is all training documented to include training topic; course length; date of training; course outline or curriculum; instructor name; and student name with all training records maintained in individual employee files or master training file?

- Are supervisors expected to provide employees with regular performance coaching, and are these coaching conversations documented?

There are a variety of low or no cost options for providing training for employees, including in-house training programs; outside training; [NIRMA's LocalGovU](#); [NIRMA instructor-led courses](#); monthly [NIRMA Safety Shorts](#) and Roll Call articles; and [Nebraska Jail Standards Training Bulletins](#) (older but still valuable). 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](mailto:tduncan@nirma.info).

12 High Risk Critical Tasks	
Law Enforcement	Jail
1. Use of Force	1. Use of Force
2. EVOC/Pursuits	2. Intake/Booking
3. Arrest, Search & Seizure	3. Classification
4. Care Custody, Control of Detainees	4. Searches & Contraband Control
5. Officer-Involved Domestic Violence	5. Medical & Psychological Care
6. Property & Evidence	6. Prisoner Transport
7. Off Duty Action	7. Rape/Sexual Assault
8. Sexual Harassment/Misconduct	8. Sexual Harassment/Misconduct
9. Hiring & Retention	9. Inmate Grievances/Rights
10. IA and Citizen Complaints	10. Emergency Procedures
11. Special Operations	11. Internal Affairs
12. Persons of Diminished Capacity	12. Nutrition and Special Dietary Needs

## **GENERAL SAFETY**

**By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention Manager and Safety Specialist**

### **August Safety Observances**

Man, I hate to say it, but summer is almost over. I know that the summer solstice is not until September 22<sup>nd</sup> but for all intents and purposes summer is over when school starts and around here, kids go back to school the week of August 12<sup>th</sup>.

According to the National Safety Council, August safety topics to consider include Stop on Red Week, Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over, and Back to School Month. A theme that connects all these topics is safe driving. Car crashes consistently rank in the top three of NIRMA's loss leaders, or most common causes of loss.

During fiscal year 2023 - 2024 NIRMA member car crashes resulted in property and liability claims totaling \$1,502,862 and workers' compensation claims totaling \$386,339. Combined, car crashes accounted for \$1,889,202 out of the total incurred of \$7,986,759. So, 23% of the total amount incurred by NIRMA members, or almost ¼ of the total amount NIRMA paid in claims during the last fiscal year was the result of car crashes.

NIRMA members are encouraged and expected to actively manage the risks faced by their employees. What has your county or agency done to actively address the risk of car crashes?

The Insurance Information Institute recommends the following practices:

- Check employee motor vehicle records upon hire and regularly thereafter. (Also, a NIRMA Best Safety Practice)
- Implement and enforce a mandatory seat-belt policy for all drivers and passengers.
- Prohibit employees from using cell phones while driving.
- Recognize that aggression and hostility are personality traits that may lead to crashes.
- Require employees that regularly drive vehicles in the course of their employment to complete a driver-training program that includes safe following distance, speed awareness and control, and proper backing techniques.
- Implement a periodic safety inspection and maintenance program for all vehicles used for business purposes.
- Recognize accident-free drivers to encourage better driving.
- Make sure that your work schedule or procedures do not pressure drivers to speed, complete paperwork while driving or engage in other poor driving habits.
- Have a procedure for drivers to follow after a crash.
- Investigate the cause of all accidents and use the results as a training opportunity for all drivers. (Also, a NIRMA Best Safety Practice)

Driver training and accident investigations are crucial in your risk management of car crashes. NIRMA recommends and provides resources for both practices. Todd Duncan, K.C. Pawling and I are all certified National Safety Council Defensive Driving Course 4 Hour (DDC 4) instructors. This is an in-person interactive course that delivers practical strategies to reduce crash-related injuries, fatalities and other related costs. Not only does it provide key understanding, skills and techniques to avoid crashes, but it also focuses on why drivers make the choices they make and why they should reconsider those behind the wheel choices.

Driver training courses are also provided through NIRMA's Online University and Online Streaming Videos. These can be found on the NIRMA website by clicking on Training under the Resources tab.

Accident/Incident investigations should be performed anytime there is a near-miss or an actual property damage or injury claim. The goal is to find the root cause of the incident and develop ways to prevent recurrence. These findings can then be shared with employees during training so that they have the knowledge to prevent a similar incident from happening to them.

As always, if you have any questions on the topics and resources discussed above, please reach out to me at 1.800.642.6671 or [chad@nirma.info](mailto:chad@nirma.info). Take care!

# **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

**By K C Pawling, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist**

## **Take A Moment to Look Up**

OSHA reports that contact with or exposure to electricity continues to be one of the leading causes of workplace fatalities and injuries in the United States. Between 2011 and 2022, a total of 1,322 people lost their lives in workplace incidents involving electricity, and 70% of these fatalities occurred in non-electricity related occupations. For example, tree trimmers, construction laborers, and truck drivers.

The three types of work just listed are part of the responsibilities of many county road departments. From bridge work to tree removal or ditch cleanout with an excavator or similar equipment, county employees are at risk when working near powerlines. The causes reported to OSHA are as follows:

- 48% working on or near energized wires or parts,**
- 1% arc-flash/blast,**
- 3% PPE issue,**
- 6% lockout/tagout safety device removed, and**
- 41% contact with overhead power lines.**

The following are some safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation.

### **Power Line Safety Tips:**

- Look up before raising a ladder or pole to make sure that it will not come within 10 feet of any power lines.
- Do not work within a minimum of 10 feet of all overhead power lines.
- Use wooden or fiberglass ladders outdoors. Metal ladders conduct electricity.
- Contact your utility company immediately to report downed power lines outside your home or workplace.
- Always assume fallen power lines are energized. Stay at least 35 feet away from a downed power line and any nearby objects it may be touching, such as a fence or a tree limb.
- Never touch a person who is in contact with a downed power line. Call 911 immediately.
- Downed power lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death. Electricity wants to move from a high voltage zone to a low voltage zone - and it could do that through your body.

### **Downed Power line Safety Tips:**

- If you see a downed power line, move away from it and anything touching it. The ground around power lines - up to 35 feet away - may be energized.

- You cannot tell whether a power line is energized just by looking at it. You should assume that all downed power lines are live.
- The proper way to move away from the power line is to shuffle away with small steps, always keeping your feet together and on the ground. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock.
- If you see someone in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch them. You could become the next victim. Call 911 for help.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it by using an object such as a broom or stick. Even non-conductive materials like wood or cloth can conduct electricity if even slightly wet.
- Be careful not to touch or step in water near where a downed power line is located.
- Do not drive over downed power lines.
- If your car comes in contact with a downed power line while you are inside, stay in the car. Honk your horn to summon help, but direct others to stay away from your car.
- If you must leave your vehicle because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with both the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Shuffle or bunny hop away from the vehicle or equipment.

I want to remind you that you are at risk of contacting powerlines when trimming trees, using an excavator, operating a crane, or spreading gravel with a dump truck. Take time to do a quick workplace safety audit, noting any of the hazards you may encounter. Don't forget to take time to look up too!

I would also encourage you to contact your local electric utility provider and arrange for them to assist you with a safety meeting covering electrical safety. Most of the providers have a demonstration trailer that they will bring out to you and help you better understand the dangers of power lines.

Don't forget that our loss prevention staff here at NIRMA are here to help with your safety meetings. If I can help in any way, do not hesitate to contact me. [kcpawling@nirma.info](mailto:kcpawling@nirma.info) or 402-310-4417.