



# Safety Shorts

## General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

December 2022

Volume 10, Number 12

### December is National Identity Theft Prevention and Awareness Month

During the holiday season, it is especially important to remain vigilant while shopping as the pandemic has pushed shoppers' lives online and be aware of the new cybersecurity risks that come with the change.

Identity theft is not only the fastest growing crime, but it is also ranked as one of American's most-feared crimes. Data breaches remain prevalent, meaning cybercriminals continue to target organizations that collect our personal information for financial gain, which often means selling your personal information, on the "dark web" to other cybercriminals who use it to commit identity crimes.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. - <https://www.uth.edu/news/story.htm?id=255d2646-a1a2-4d9b-8ec4-35349e2c68b7>.

It is a good time to say Thank you to all the good people affiliated with NIRMA and to say have a great Holiday Month and a Happy New Year.

## **GENERAL SAFETY**

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

### **An Exciting New Resource is Coming for NIRMA Members in 2023**

Since the beginning of October, I have been working with Michael Melnik, creator of The Energized Approach, and three NIRMA member counties who have been piloting The Energized Approach to streamline the full-scale rollout of the program to all NIRMA members in January of 2023.

The Energized Approach program will involve bi-weekly email messages with access to two components of Michael's online learning platform. These components can be utilized separately or together:

- 1) A library of injury prevention videos that can be viewed on-demand, and
- 2) Resources videos for county and agency leaders to help them develop and engage staff in a safety-minded workplace culture.

I have written many times about strains and sprains being some of NIRMA's most common types of injuries. Michael's background is in occupational therapy, and he has worked with many companies to reduce back injuries and musculoskeletal disorders. The Energized Approach provides multiple award-winning injury prevention videos aimed at reducing back injuries. All these videos are now available to NIRMA members, at no cost. There are short videos to use to start a conversation and longer videos used to provide more of a training experience. NIRMA is committed to providing resources to assist our members in reducing injuries to protect their employees and their financial resources.

In addition to the injury prevention video library, NIRMA members will be able to take part in a powerful new risk management tool: Energizing Your Safety Culture. Have you ever felt like your loss prevention and safety program just cannot get any traction, or for every success there are multiple setbacks? This program, Energizing Your Safety Culture was created to add energy to important programs like your loss prevention and safety program. This process is intended to be used by all members in a leadership position.

I would like to invite all elected and appointed officials, along with anyone in a leadership position to join us on **January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 10:00 am Central** for a kickoff webinar where you will be able to meet Michael Melnik, learn about all the content you will receive and how The Energized Approach can Energize Your Safety Culture. So, mark your calendars and watch your email for the formal invite with a link to join this webinar. The link will be emailed to all county board members and other safety leaders just before the holidays. Those receiving the email invite should feel free to share it with other leaders in their county or agency.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. As always, I can be reached at 1.800.642.6671 and [chad@nirma.info](mailto:chad@nirma.info). I look forward to seeing you, via webinar, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 20223. Take care.

## **GENERAL SAFETY**

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

### **Money for Minutes Reminder**

I can't believe that December is already here, we'll be celebrating New Years before you know it. With that in mind, I wanted to remind safety committee chairpersons and members that your 2022 safety committee minutes need to be submitted to NIRMA by 5:00 p.m. Central, Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, if your committee would like to be eligible for the 2022 *Money for Minutes* drawing.

The *Money for Minutes* eligibility requirements are as follows:

- Conduct at least four quarterly safety committee meetings.
- Discuss all incidents, events, injuries, and accidents and make recommendations about how to prevent reoccurrence of similar events.
- Submit minutes from each meeting, containing recommendations, to NIRMA for review.

If your safety committee meets the requirements as outlined above, your committee's name will be entered into a drawing for one of five \$500.00 awards. The award winners will be announced in February of 2023. Good luck to those committees that made the commitment to hold their quarterly meetings and work hard towards preventing workplace incidents and injuries.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. As always, I can be reached at 1.800.642.6671 and [chad@nirma.info](mailto:chad@nirma.info). I look forward to seeing you, via webinar, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 20223. Take care.

# **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS**

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

## **Cold Weather Safety for Law Enforcement**

'Tis the season for Nebraska winter weather, and this means performing routine and critical operations in less-than-ideal or sometimes even hazardous conditions. As a law enforcement officer, working in hazardous conditions is a necessary part of the job, whether you are driving to and from work off duty or responding to a call for service. However, there are things you can do to enhance safety when the temperatures plummet.

A good first step is to maintain situational awareness, which includes paying attention to weather conditions. Today's smartphones make it easy to get real time severe weather alerts anytime, anywhere. Simply download your favorite weather app and set your notification preferences to allow for weather alerts.

When it comes to driving, one of the most important things you can do to enhance safety is slow down and increase your following distance. Leave early when commuting to work to give yourself extra time and allow you to adjust your speed to the conditions. In keeping with the [Below 100 program](#), watch your speed even when responding to emergencies. Arriving at the scene in one piece and going home at the end of your shift are top priorities.

Ensure your vehicles are properly serviced, maintained, and stocked with winter supplies. Do you have an ice scraper, jumper cables, tow rope, blanket, and a shovel in your vehicles? Do you have adequate tread on your tires and some method of improving traction if things get icy or you get stuck? A bag of kitty litter or sand can give you the added traction you may need if you get stuck in slippery conditions.

Slips and falls are one of the leading causes of workplace injuries. This risk is even higher for law enforcement officers who are required to walk, run, or sometimes grapple on icy surfaces. A simple way to reduce this risk is to invest in an inexpensive pair of ice cleats like Yaktrax or TREX that can be worn over your shoes/boots.

When the temperature is zero degrees Fahrenheit or below, it takes about 30 minutes for exposed skin to get frostbite. At 15 degrees below zero with even a little bit of wind, frostbite is possible within 15 minutes. Insulated clothing including facemasks, hats, gloves, and winter shoes/boots are a must, especially when performing duties that require extended periods outdoors such as crash investigations, traffic direction, perimeter security, etc. Cold feet can make for a miserable shift, so you may want to consider wool socks which provide superior warmth and retain heat even when wet.

One winter patrol activity that can be particularly hazardous is motor vehicle crash investigations. Nothing will get the juices flowing like an out-of-control car or semi careening towards you as you are taking measurements at the scene of a crash during a snow or ice storm. From a risk/reward standpoint, when road conditions are hazardous, it is often advisable to move all involved persons and vehicles to a safe

## **Cold Weather Safety for Law Enforcement - *continued***

location clear of passing vehicles as soon as possible to complete the investigation. In extreme cases, e.g., icy conditions, where all involved vehicles are off the roadway, the best course of action may be to transport the involved persons to a safe location to conduct the investigation and wait to tow the vehicles until conditions improve. Obviously, extenuating circumstances may influence this decision (i.e., fatal crashes, DUIs, etc.).

Last but certainly not least, remember to practice accessing your weapon and arrest and control tools while wearing winter gear. Can you safely and proficiently draw and fire your firearm(s) or access your radio, cuffs, baton, pepper spray, and other critical equipment while wearing a winter coat and gloves? This can be particularly tricky for deputies who wear a winter coat over an external vest carrier with a MOLLE system. It is better to figure this out at the range than on the side of the road during a violent encounter.

Stay safe out there!

Please contact Todd at 531-510-7446 or [tduncan@nirma.info](mailto:tduncan@nirma.info) if you have any questions.

## **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

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

### **When the Weather Outside Is Frightful...**

When the weather outside is frightful, the road departments are sometimes given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills regarding snow and ice removal. I remember as new road department employee, being excited about moving snow. It was something new and different, and I really enjoyed the fresh snows that had no wind with them. Just a beautiful 6-8" snow laying like a thick white blanket. Running the machine through it and just letting it roll off the end of the moldboard, leaving the road freshly plowed clean. No wind blowing the snow back onto the finished product, leaving it perfect for the first motorist to appreciate it. I really did enjoy it for a couple years until the winter of 2009-10. After that winter season, all the excitement was gone.

As road department employees we also know that we might have the opportunity to spend our holidays away from our families so that other's families can make it to their celebrations as safely as possible. So, while you are at work instead of the family Christmas celebration, we need to make sure that we have done everything possible to get us home safely.

Equipment maintenance is essential in cold weather. If anything is going to breakdown, it seems like the cold weather will make it happen. The following items on machines should be checked, replaced or even extra maintenance practiced making sure you have a safe day or night of clearing roads.

- All signage in place and good repair – slow moving and stay back signs.
- Lighting – strobes, 4-way flashers, and headlights.
- Tires – Do you have spares available if needed? I experienced one year that was cold enough making the tires stiff and when operators would turn around, the tires would blow the O-rings causing flats.
- Fuel and fuel system – Correct fuel and additives used? Do you have the fuel filters and water separators serviced? Are there enough spare filters available?
- Electrical system – Batteries and charging system. Weak batteries can cause the charging system to work harder than needed, leaving potential for a stall without being able to restart. Hopefully you are running with all your lights on too, adding even more load.
- Engine coolant system – This is important to keep your engine at optimal operating temperature, but this can also affect your in-cab heating.
- Cab filters – are they clean, free of debris?
- Engine filters – clean and have replacements available?
- Engine belts and hoses – Are they in good repair and spares available?
- Hydraulic systems – hoses in good repair, leaks repaired?
- In cab signals and diagnostics – all warning lights addressed; buzzers work appropriately?

## **When the Weather Outside Is Frightful...** *continued*

- Adequately stocked first aid kit.
- Phone chargers and two-way radios in good repair?

Along with the items listed above, a couple other things to think about. One of those things is between snow removal activities, it is a good idea to get your machines melted off and washed up. This will allow you to see the condition of your machines, it will also slow the corrosion of the machine from the ice removal products that are used. Second, take appropriate clothing along. I understand that you may not want to wear a heavy coat all day while operating the machine but plan for failure.

This is just a small article, hopefully getting you to think about some actions that can be taken to make your winter responsibilities a little safer. There are many other things that should be thought about and considered. We all owe it to our families to take the extra time to **BE** and think safe. Let's make sure we all make it home at night!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, I can be reached at [kcpawling@nirma.info](mailto:kcpawling@nirma.info) or 402-310-4417. Please have a very Merry Christmas!

