



# Safety Shorts

## General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

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**“The last page of the year is written, but the next chapter is just beginning.**

NIRMA staff would like to thank you for a great 2025 and wish you a safe and happy New Year!

If you have topics that you would like covered in the Safety Short articles, please send us an email and tell us what you would like to see.

### **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

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

#### **A Safe and Merry Christmas on the County Roads”**

’Twas the week before Christmas, and all through the shop,  
The graders were parked, and the sanding trucks stopped.

The cones were all stacked in a neat little row,  
Reflective and bright for the next winter snow.

The foreman was checking his holiday list:  
“Signs straight? Bolts tight? Nothing we missed?”  
For out on the highways, the wind starts to bite,  
And a loose STOP sign could ruin the night!

The plows were all fueled, their blades shining bright,  
Ready to battle the storm Christmas night.  
Chains were inspected, the salt bins were full,  
Because icy blacktop can be awfully cruel.

Then up on the roof there arose such a clatter,  
The crew ran outside to see what’s the matter.

It wasn’t a crash or a runaway load—  
Just Santa himself, checking county roads!

He winked and he said, “You folks do it right—  
Your signage is perfect, your shoulders are tight.  
No hazards, no losses, no claims to be found,  
You’ve kept every driver safe and sound!”

So remember this season, as snow starts to fall,  
Loss prevention matters—it's a gift for us all.  
From MUTCD rules to the cones that you set,  
Safety's the present we'll never regret.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a clear lane—  
May your roads stay safe through snow, sleet, and rain!

If I can help you with your safety and loss prevention efforts, reach out to me  
at [kcpawling@nirma.info](mailto:kcpawling@nirma.info) or 402-310-4417. Have a safe and Merry Christmas!

# **GENERAL SAFETY**

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

## **Cyber Security Best Practices for NIRMA Members: Key Recommendations**

**County governments face unique cyber security challenges due to their responsibility** for sensitive data and often limited resources. Based on insights provided by Matthew Mead a cyber security expert with Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC, here are actionable steps to strengthen your county or agency's security posture:

### 1. Address Resource Limitations

- **Prioritize Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR):** Implement an EDR solution to monitor systems and detect threats in real time.
- **Ensure Active Monitoring:** Assign personnel or leverage managed services to respond quickly to alerts.

### 2. Combat Phishing Attacks

- **Regular, Interactive Training:** Move beyond classroom sessions to real-time, desk-based tutorials. Implement simulated phishing attacks and provide immediate feedback when an employee clicks a phishing link.
- **Promote Reporting Culture:** Encourage employees to report suspicious emails to IT, as attackers often target multiple individuals.

### 3. Strengthen Incident Response

- **Familiarize Yourself with NIRMA's Cyber Security Toolkit and the eRisk Hub:** Both resources are accessible via the Interact portal on NIRMA's website.
- **Develop and Test a Practical Plan:** Avoid overly complex documents. Create a concise, actionable playbook and rehearse it regularly.
- **Include Cross-Functional Teams:** Involve IT, communications, HR, physical security, legal counsel, and forensic partners in exercises.
- **Maintain Updated Contact Lists:** Ensure backups for key team members and store lists offline for emergencies.

### 4. Secure Operational Technology (OT)

- **Collaborate Across IT and OT:** Define and monitor who can interact with systems like HVAC, access control systems and security cameras.

### 5. Respond Quickly to External Alerts

- **Act Immediately on Notifications:** When agencies or partners warn of a cyber incident, respond without delay to minimize impact.

## 6. Notify NIRMA and Engage Law Enforcement Early

- **Notify NIRMA Immediately Upon Identifying a Suspected Data Breach or Cyber Security Incident:** Do not hesitate, do not wait. Also contact your IT professionals, they should be made aware of any communications with a breach coach to ensure the forensic investigation is completed.
- **File an IC3 Complaint Immediately:** If you suspect or fall victim to a cyber crime, report it to the FBI using the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) as soon as possible. If you have a breach coach involved in an incident, they will help guide you on proper reporting.
- **Contact U.S. Secret Service for Fund Recovery:** If a business email compromise results in funds being wired to the wrong party, promptly reach out to the U.S. Secret Service to increase the chance of recovering funds. Again, if a breach coach is involved, they will assist with these notifications.

### Conclusion:

Cybersecurity for county governments requires balancing transparency, resource constraints, and evolving threats. By prioritizing EDR, fostering awareness, practicing incident response, and securing OT systems, counties can significantly reduce risk and build resilience.

When you joined NIRMA, you became part of an organization dedicated to managing risk. Along with your fellow NIRMA pool members, your constituents and Nebraska law expect you to actively address the risks associated with today's online business environment. If you have any questions or need guidance on how to do so, please don't hesitate to contact NIRMA.

As always, I can be reached at [chad@nirma.info](mailto:chad@nirma.info) or 1.800.642.6671.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS**

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

### **Strip and Body Cavity Searches: Balancing Legality, Safety, and Liability**

Inmate searches, particularly strip and body cavity searches, remain one of the most constitutionally sensitive—and operationally dangerous—functions performed within any correctional facility. Every search implicates the Fourth Amendment’s protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the U.S. Supreme Court and Eighth Circuit have made clear that the justification, manner, and scope of an inmate search determine whether it is lawful. Not conducting proper searches, however, carries its own serious consequences: staff injuries, inmate overdoses, suicides, and the introduction of dangerous contraband. Nebraska Jail Standards and NIRMA’s model inmate search policy provide a legally defensible foundation, but only when applied consistently and correctly.

The Supreme Court’s landmark ruling—*Bell v. Wolfish* and *Florence v. Board of Chosen Freeholders*—recognizes that strip searches may be intrusive, but they must be reasonably related to **legitimate security interests** and not excessive, degrading, or arbitrary. Although *Florence* **permits blanket strip searches** for arrestees entering **general population**, it **does not eliminate the requirement for individualized reasonable suspicion in other circumstances**, e.g. inmate placed in a holding cell by themselves that will likely be bonding out and not be housed in general population.

The Eighth Circuit has reinforced these principles by holding that strip searches conducted in humiliating ways, cross-gender intrusive searches without emergency need, or searches performed as harassment violate the Constitution. Nebraska Jail Standards further require that all searches preserve inmate dignity, incorporate the least intrusive method, and be performed by same-sex staff when involving intimate areas.

Search failures create enormous safety risks inside jails. Inadequate intake searches remain a leading cause of contraband-related overdoses and in-custody deaths. Nebraska Standards mandate that inmates be inspected for injuries, vermin, needle marks, or other medical concerns “to the greatest extent possible,” recognizing that the intake search process is often the first opportunity to identify life-threatening conditions. On the opposite end of the spectrum, overly intrusive searches—particularly strip searches conducted without proper justification or privacy—produce substantial legal payouts and erode community trust.

Cross-gender search issues are a common source of civil rights violation claims. Nebraska Jail Standards and NIRMA’s model policy strictly limit cross-gender strip and body cavity searches, and the policy provides additional safeguards by allowing inmates to request same-gender pat searches and by prohibiting staff from touching intimate areas during strip searches. Similarly, searches of transgender and intersex inmates demand heightened professionalism and individualized assessment. Courts within the Eighth Circuit expect staff to protect safety and dignity while avoiding actions that could be construed as harassment or humiliation.

Body cavity searches carry the highest degree of constitutional scrutiny. Nebraska Jail Standards require probable cause, prior authorization from the administrator, and performance by qualified medical personnel under sanitary conditions. Any deviation from this process—such as performing manual probing without medical staff—immediately creates extreme legal exposure.

While inmate searches are inherently risky, much of the liability can be avoided through consistent adherence to Nebraska Jail Standards, deliberate professionalism, and thorough documentation. The following recommendations provide clear steps staff and supervisors can take to reduce risk and protect both safety and constitutional rights.

### **Recommendations to Reduce Risk and Legal Liability**

- **Use the least intrusive method first.** Begin with pat searches or metal detection and escalate to strip or cavity searches only when permitted by Nebraska Jail Standards or when justified by reasonable suspicion or facility policy.
- **Comply strictly with gender-appropriate search requirements.** Use same-sex staff for strip and cavity searches and for pat searches involving sensitive areas unless an emergency prevents it.
- **Ensure privacy for all strip searches.** Conduct searches in rooms or enclosed areas shielded from staff or inmates not involved in the process, preventing unnecessary exposure or humiliation.
- **Clearly articulate reasonable suspicion.** Base suspicion on specific factors such as criminal charges, observed behavior, prior contraband history, medical concerns, or placement on suicide watch—and document these indicators.
- **Document every strip or cavity search thoroughly.** Include date, time, location, justification, staff involved, items found, and behavior that formed the basis for suspicion or probable cause, as required by Nebraska Jail Standards.
- **Communicate professionally with inmates.** Explain the search process, maintain a calm tone, avoid degrading language, and ensure respectful treatment throughout the procedure.
- **Follow policy strictly for transgender and intersex inmates.** Apply individualized assessment, preserve dignity, avoid unnecessary exposure, and comply with facility procedures for these populations.
- **Avoid any physical intrusion during strip searches.** Staff must not touch breasts, buttocks, or genitals during strip searches and must never remove objects from body orifices; only medical personnel may conduct cavity searches.
- **Obtain administrator approval and medical personnel for all cavity searches.** Ensure probable cause exists and follow all procedural requirements before conducting any such search.
- **Provide annual training and supervision.** Reinforce Fourth Amendment law, Nebraska Jail Standards, contraband trends, gender search rules, and professional communication; supervisors should also routinely review search documentation for accuracy and compliance.

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).

**Stay professional. Stay accountable. Protect the badge.**

***NIRMA Member Officials, Supervisors, and Managers:***

***Have a human resource question or issue? Contact NIRMA's Human Resources Helpline at (866) 896-6423.***

***Have a non-HR legal question or issue? Contact NIRMA's Legal Link at (402) 742-9240 or by email at [legallink@nirma.info](mailto:legallink@nirma.info)***