



Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

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New Year, Healthier You – January is Healthy Weight Awareness Month

According to Liane Vadheim, Registered Dietitian:

Most people do almost half of their daily activities, unaware of the habits that are either helping keep them healthy or getting in the way of that goal.

The benefits of achieving a healthy weight are well known: increased life span, improved mood, and mental health, better strength, and ability to carry out everyday activities are all positive outcomes. Losing excess pounds can decrease the risk of several medical diagnoses, such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and some types of cancer. - <https://news.intermountainhealth.org/new-year-healthier-you--january-is-healthy-weight-awareness-month/>

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Manager

Last Reminder – Money for Minutes Deadline is January 31st, 2024

I wanted to send a friendly reminder to safety committee chairpersons and members that your 2023 safety committee minutes need to be submitted to NIRMA by 5:00 p.m. Central, Wednesday, January 31st, 2024, if your committee would like to be eligible for the 2023 *Money for Minutes* drawing.

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

- Conduct at least one safety committee meeting per quarter during the calendar year.
- 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 the **TEN** \$500.00 awards. The award

winners will be announced in February of 2023. Good luck to those committees that take the safety of their employees seriously and made the commitment to hold at least four quarterly safety committee meetings.

Safety Committee Responsibilities and Duties – Facility Auditing

NIRMA members benefit from proactive risk management and loss prevention techniques. A member's first line of defense in preventing workplace injuries for both their employees and visitors is a regular workplace inspection program using a comprehensive workplace inspection checklist. Regular workplace inspections are a part of proper facility management and should be conducted to identify and address hazards as they arise before they can cause an injury and become a liability. If you are unable to address the hazard quickly and properly, the hazard needs to be marked in a way that makes it easy to avoid for those that may encounter it. Examples include "Wet Floor" signs, painting uneven concrete with high-visibility paint or placing cones and signage around a temporary excavation.

Inspection checklists are a useful tool. They help to ensure inspections are conducted correctly, consistently and the results are easy to understand. NIRMA has developed the following workplace inspection checklists to assist our members:

Property/Building Inspection Checklist - This checklist is intended to be used when inspecting administrative or office type buildings to reduce the risk of property, liability, and workers' compensation claims.

Shop Inspection Checklist: This checklist is intended for highway departments to identify and manage hazards more common in a shop-type environment.

Ag Society Inspection Checklist: This checklist was developed to address risks and hazards associated with fairgrounds and activities there.

Each of these checklists are available under the Resources tab on the NIRMA website located at www.nirma.info.

Industry standards dictate that workplace inspections are completed at regular intervals. NIRMA recommends quarterly intervals, and that the results are documented and maintained for at least three years. As stated earlier, inspections are a proactive way to reduce the risk of workplace injuries and accidents. Additionally, regular documented inspections provide a history that can be used to defend a NIRMA member if a liability claim is brought against them.

Please contact me if you have any questions about inspections, checklists, or training. As always, I can be reached at chad@nirma.info and 800.642.6671.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By K C Pawling, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Focus On A Safer 2024

Loss leader reports are one of the tools used by the Loss Prevention Team at NIRMA. "Loss leaders" are the most frequently submitted type of claim that we receive from members during a specified period of time. The data is collected from all coverage lines, such as workers' compensation, and the property-related coverages. As part of our efforts to stay informed about the loss leaders, we receive weekly, quarterly, and yearly reports. The reports supply frequent reminders to help us focus on the reality of what our member counties are experiencing. We are not left wondering or guessing what the focus of our efforts should be.

The areas of concern that are always on the top of our loss leader reports for claims falling under the worker's compensation coverage are slips trips and falls, strain or injured by, and struck or injured by. For property claims, loss leaders include adverse events related to road maintenance, collisions with equipment or other equipment loss, and motor vehicle accidents.

It is tempting to react dismissively to the loss leader statistics, since these types of losses are going to naturally occur and should be expected with the nature of county business operations. But this is a dangerous attitude, as it fails to take responsibility for what is within our control. We can, through loss prevention and risk management efforts, mitigate losses and improve safety. In fact, our whole business in the county road department **IS** taking responsibility for the safety of those around us.

The following are six reminders to reduce the incidence of our loss leaders, in both the areas of property, and workers' compensation.

- 1) Know your limitations. Ask for help when lifting heavy items or even if you need a spotter while using a ladder.
- 2) Be aware of your surroundings. Are there weather-related concerns that we need to consider? Are you working around railroad tracks, where extra situational awareness is essential? Are there multiple operators that need to coordinate with each other?
- 3) Communicate. Are you using all the appropriate signage to warn road or shop users of potential hazardous or high-risk situations? This is for your safety **AND** theirs.
- 4) Is the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) available for your use? Are you taking the time to use it?
- 5) Have you had the proper training for the tasks you are asked to do, or the equipment you are asked to operate, or even training for the environment you are asked to work in?
- 6) Report any perceived unsafe condition to your supervisor. Whether it is a road concern, shop, or equipment concern, report it.

This is not intended to be a specific or exhaustive list of practices that a road department can do to lower loss incident rates, but it is aimed at getting you thinking about safe work practices. What can you, and should you be doing to work safer this year?

If you need training or would just like an outside perspective of a situation you are dealing with, do not hesitate to contact us here at NIRMA. We will do what we can to come alongside you to help decide the best plan of action for your situation. Let's try to work safer in 2024. I can be reached at 402-310-4417 or kcpawling@nirma.info.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

By Todd Duncan, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Jail Intake and Admissions

Intake and admission of inmates is a high-risk critical task that jail staff often do daily. It is essential that jail staff recognize that they have a constitutional duty to provide safe and secure detention of all inmates. The intake process is also one of the most dangerous areas of jail operations. Detainees entering the facility may be under the influence, agitated, combative, suicidal, concealing contraband or weapons, and staff are often unaware of the subject's background. Even if the booking officer has prior experience with the subject, it can be difficult if not impossible to predict their behavior.

Given the constitutional duty to care for incarcerated individuals, jail staff can be held liable and face criminal charges for negligence or deliberate indifference based on improper care, custody, and control of inmates during the admission process. An essential strategy for mitigating risk is to have sound policies and procedures. Sound policies and procedures consistently followed are essential to:

- Officer and inmate safety,
- Improving security while protecting the rights of inmates,
- Identifying and meeting special needs of inmates (medical, suicide prevention, ADA compliance, etc.),
- Enhancing operational efficiency and reducing problems with receiving inmates, and
- Reducing risk and liability.

The booking and admissions process has legal, security, health, and human relations implications. All forms used for the admission process must be carefully designed to address legal, safety, and liability issues. Thorough, accurate documentation is critical from the moment the inmate enters the jail. Without the proper arrest or commitment papers, a person cannot legally be confined. It is the booking officer's responsibility to ensure that arresting officers bringing detainees to the jail for admission have all necessary documentation.

The booking and admissions process is in most cases the inmate's first contact with the jail. First impressions are important; the way you handle incoming inmates sets the tone for their entire stay at your facility. Consistently demonstrating good officer safety, professionalism, and courtesy while handling inmates will reduce the likelihood of having problems during the admission process and throughout the inmate's stay.

Safety and Security During Admissions

A. Weapons

The first rule for security during admissions is that **no person should ever be allowed to carry a firearm inside the jail**. This is true in any jail, including smaller facilities. Instances where staff have been relaxed or complacent about firearms in their jail have often resulted in tragedy.

It is important to provide weapons lockers or other acceptable means to securely store firearms and other deadly weapons prior to entering the jail. Jail staff should be mindful of incoming law enforcement officers entering the facility to verify they have removed their weapons prior to entering the secure area of the jail. One way arresting officers can avoid inadvertently driving away from the jail without their firearm following the booking process is to place their patrol/transport vehicle keys in the weapons locker along with their firearm when entering the jail.

B. Vehicles

Ideally, you should have a sally-port adjacent to your booking area. A sally-port is a secure vehicle entrance which can be closed after a transporting vehicle has entered the facility. A sally-port allows you to bring vehicles close to the admissions area thereby increasing officer and facility security. If a sally-port is available, it is important that it is used consistently and as it was designed. It is also important to keep the sally-port clean and free of makeshift weapons or items that inmates could use for self-harm, such as mops, brooms, and bottles of anti-freeze.

Smaller jails often do not have a sally-port and present increased risk for officers transporting inmates between their vehicle and the jail. A relatively cost-effective solution in these cases is to build a sally-port adjacent to the jail admissions areas using chain-link fencing or similar material.

If you do not have a sally-port, be sure that your procedures for admission are clear and that all officers who will be bringing inmates to the jail fully understand your admissions procedure.

C. Searches

Another important aspect of security during admissions is to require arresting/transporting officers to thoroughly search inmates prior to admission to the jail. You must make it clear to all personnel bringing inmates into the jail that they are expected to search their inmates prior to entering the facility. Even though you have informed all personnel of this requirement, do not assume they have done so properly. Treat all incoming inmates as though they have not been searched and be sure that jail staff understand they are required to personally search every inmate. Staff should never assume the inmate is not in possession of weapons or contraband.

D. Holding Cell

It is important to have a holding cell near the booking area, preferably within line of sight of the booking officer's desk. Having a secure holding area near the booking area is very important. It allows staff to focus their attention on booking one inmate at a time by placing other inmates awaiting booking in holding cells. It also enables the placement of newly admitted or high-risk inmates in cells that can be continuously monitored/observed by staff. Holding cells often provide the best placement option for inmates who are intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, or considered high-risk due to injury, illness, or other issue.

If your facility does not have a holding cell, consider redesigning your booking and admission area, taking into consideration past problems or challenges you have had with that area. For instance, booking areas often do not adequately protect staff from incoming inmates who are combative or potentially violent. Computers, cleaning supplies, and other equipment within grasp of inmates can be used as weapons or be damaged. Ideally, all equipment and other items within the booking area that could be used as makeshift weapons should be permanently affixed to an immovable object or placed out of reach of inmates when possible.

Receiving Inmates

A. Commitment Documents

Jail booking officers admitting inmates into the jail must be thoroughly familiar with confinement orders and other commitment papers for each inmate. Booking officers must be able to confirm whether a document is legally valid before admitting an inmate. This requires training which can be provided by jail leadership, county attorney's office staff, and court staff. General guidelines for commitments are:

1. Commitment papers should contain the legal charge against the inmate.
2. Admission to jail should be supported by a valid commitment order issued by the court.
3. Any person bringing an inmate to the jail must furnish the booking officer with proper credentials; a badge or uniform alone is not proper identification. The booking officer should ask the arresting officer to show their agency credentials if they are not familiar with the arresting/transporting officer.
4. The booking officer must be very familiar with the laws of the state governing the confinement of special types of inmates, especially juveniles.

B. Medical Screening

Conducting proper, thorough medical and mental health screenings for incoming inmates is one of the most critical tasks performed by jail staff. Failure to recognize and properly address medical or mental health conditions in a timely manner is one of the leading causes of preventable death and lawsuits against jails/staff. Booking officers are often under pressure from arresting agencies to accept inmates suffering from illness or injury. The booking officer should not accept an inmate who, in the judgement of the booking officer, appears to be sick or injured and in need of medical treatment. In such cases, the booking officer should inform the arresting officer that they must obtain medical clearance for confinement from an emergency room or hospital provider prior to admission to jail.

NIRMA recommends jails **do not** accept inmates with the following injuries or conditions:

1. Unconscious
2. Having or recently had convulsions
3. Significant external bleeding or signs/symptoms of internal bleeding

4. Suspected or obvious fractures
5. Signs/symptoms of head, neck, or spinal injuries
6. Any type of serious injury
7. Unable to walk under own power
8. BAC of over 300 mg/dl (potentially life threatening)
9. Signs/symptoms or inmate claim of severe alcohol or drug withdrawal
10. Pregnant women in labor or experiencing other serious problems
11. Reason to believe the inmate ingested or inserted drugs into their body cavities

Once an inmate is admitted into the jail, staff have a constitutional duty to ensure the inmate receives adequate medical and mental healthcare while in custody. This includes providing the inmate with necessary medication in a timely manner. It is therefore in the jail staff member's best interest to carefully screen every inmate **before** they are admitted to the jail. Doing so helps ensure that inmates obtain the health care they need and that the arresting agency takes responsibility for the cost of treating injuries or illness that existed prior to the inmate's admission to the jail.

It is crucial that all persons who function as booking officers, whether part-time or full-time, are thoroughly trained in medical and mental health screenings and the appropriate steps that must be taken to ensure inmates receive adequate, timely healthcare in emergency and non-emergency situations. This training is usually best provided by licensed medical practitioners such as a local physician or similar healthcare professional.

When a sick, injured, or suicidal inmate is admitted to your jail, you assume the following responsibilities:

1. The cost of any necessary medical care while in custody.
2. Costs associated with admission to a hospital and around-the-clock security for the inmate.
3. Costs of potential litigation by an inmate or their family as the result of alleged inadequate healthcare.
4. Costs of potential litigation by an inmate's family or estate for failing to take reasonable steps prevent an inmate's death by illness, injury, or suicide.
5. Logistical challenges of providing special attention and care to sick or injured inmates.

Jail operations represent one of the highest risk areas of county government, and a sizable portion of jail operation risk begins during the inmate booking and admission process. Multiple risk factors intersect at the jail booking area requiring jail leadership to ensure that policies and procedures are up to date, staff are well trained and held accountable for performance, and the facility's design allows jail staff to perform their duties safely and securely. The jail admission process is one area of operations where the saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" holds especially true.

Additional Resources:

[Nebraska Jail Standards Chapter 4- Admission and Release of Inmates](#)

[Nebraska Jail Standards Chapter 10- Health Services](#)

[NRS 47-703, Payment by governmental agency; when; notice to provider](#)