



# Safety Shorts

## General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

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## March Is Workplace Eye Wellness Month

Save Your Vision month falls in March, but there is a special need to address vision and eye-related concerns at the workplace, where so many adults spend hours in front of a digital screen.

External injury can result from dust, scrap, and other tiny, lightweight objects entering your eye. Any sharp object in the office can also cause serious damage. Chemical burns are a common source of injury for cleaning staff and medical professionals. More than 2,000 American workers face eye injuries every day.

"Begin with safe eyes, finish with safe eyes," - <https://nationaltoday.com/workplace-eye-wellness-month/>

### **GENERAL SAFETY**

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

#### **The Energized Approach**

NIRMA launched The Energized Approach two months ago as a new resource for all members. If you are not yet familiar with The Energized Approach, it is an online learning platform that provides members with two resources. These resources can be used together or separately, they are:

- 1) A library of on-demand injury prevention videos. This includes 90 second conversation starters, like toolbox talks, up to full-length training videos.
- 2) Resource videos for county and agency leaders that are intended to help you develop and engage staff in a safety-minded workplace culture.

Those of you in leadership positions or that have signed up should be receiving bi-weekly emails. These emails are meant to be a quick reminder, a tap on the shoulder so to speak, on how to improve your county or agency's safety culture. Each email includes a short video on a topic chosen by Michael Melnik, the creator of The Energized Approach, and recommendations for other related videos.

Along with the bi-weekly emails, you are invited to attend quarterly webinars where you can ask questions, learn how other counties are using the platform and share your successes. The first quarterly webinar is scheduled for **March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 10:00 am, CST**. Please save that date on your calendar and keep an eye out for a Zoom meeting invite from Michael. It should arrive the week prior to the meeting. I would ask you to share the invite with any other safety leaders or management folks in your county or agency, the more the merrier. There is no cost for NIRMA members to take advantage of the program so please share it with anyone you think would benefit from The Energized Approach.

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

I am in the process of presenting the Money for Minutes checks to last year's award recipients. Unfortunately, my trip was postponed due to winter weather. No complaints, as we are finally getting some much-needed moisture.

Again, congratulations to Cedar County, Dixon County, Hall County, Keith County and Rock County, 2022's Money for Minutes winners, for their commitment to their loss prevention and safety programs.

Like our members, we are working on the upcoming fiscal year's budget. I am planning to request funding for next year to continue the Money for Minutes program and possibly expand it, again. I have no reason to believe that it will not be approved for the upcoming year, but it has not been approved yet. Keep your eye out for more information when it is available.

There is one month left to hold your first quarter safety committee meeting. Remember, if you miss the first quarter meeting it is impossible to qualify for 2023's Money for Minutes. Give your county or agency a chance and make sure to hold your first quarter safety committee meeting before the end of March, discuss the previous quarter's incidents/events/injuries, comment on how to prevent reoccurrence and submit the minutes to NIRMA for review. Remember, you can't win if you don't play!

I look forward to working with your safety committees throughout 2023. Do not hesitate to reach out if I can be of any assistance. I can be reached at 1.800.642.6671 or [chad@nirma.info](mailto:chad@nirma.info)

# **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

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

## **Equipment Training vs. Orientation**

I've recently read a couple of articles about machinery-related fatalities. The first article addressed an accident that occurred when a second rider was on an industrial forklift. The second rider was thrown from the side of the machine where he was riding and died after being run over by the forklift. The second article discussed the recent findings of the MSHA (Mine Safety and Health Administration) that machinery-related fatalities have shown an upward trend in 2022.

Both articles mentioned lack of operator training as a possible cause of machinery-related fatalities. One article referred to an inability to find any *documented* training completed by the operator involved. If I have conducted any training in your county, you have heard me stress, "if it isn't documented it didn't happen." So now I ask (for some of you, again), are you documenting the training of your employees?

When we talk about training, I am not referring to showing a new operator the controls of the machine necessary to make it move. This is what I would consider orientation, not operation training. Orientation is important because all operators need to understand the machine and all the components that make it function, but they also need to know where the oil dipstick is. This is important from not only an operational standpoint but also for loss prevention. We do NOT want to use the "figure it out" approach that we sometimes hear about in road departments.

Now when we speak of training for the safe and effective operation of a machine, this includes orientation of the machine but also some "seat time." You should have an experienced operator, one with verified and *documented* hours of machine operation, providing the training. Your employee trainer should focus on the basic operation of the machine, with some practice in the county yard if possible. This will give the trainee the opportunity to acquire some "seat time." With the "seat time" they will relax and be more open to any coaching that the more experienced operator will give. Start simple—speed and efficiency will come later. You really need to focus on *safe* machine operation.

I would also like to point out that you should not be using any machine in a manner different than how it was intended to be used. This was also noted as a cause of the machine-related fatality described in the article that I referenced earlier. The piece of equipment was not being operated as outlined by the manufacturer. You can find the proper use of the machine in the operator's manual provided by your equipment dealer.

It is not a difficult task to document operator training. One suggestion is to create a simple Word document recording the name of the operator, date, and type of training that has been provided. It is also good to document how much time was devoted to the training. Along with your employee's daily log of road department activities, this documentation would show the total amount of time that an employee has spent operating a particular piece of equipment, which can be useful evidence when and if a claim arises. The training documentation should be kept in an employee's file, along with the employee's profile. Ideally, your employee documentation is updated continuously and checked for completeness at least annually.

When I speak to the loss prevention side of the business, I am speaking two-fold. Hopefully we are helping to avert any employee-related loss, which could be an injury or even a loss of life. Also, there are possible losses related to any machine damage and downtime. If a situation

## **Equipment Training vs. Orientation** - *continued*

arises where we need to prove training and equipment experience, we want to have that information recorded and in the employee's personnel file.

I understand that some of you are saying to yourselves, "ah geez this is just more paperwork to do," and I understand your feelings. At the end of the day, though, it is up to you as managers AND employees to make sure all operators are doing their jobs safely and responsibly. No one can do this for you! Take the time necessary to do the training and create the documentation to show it is completed. Let's make sure we all make it home every night.

If you have any questions or concerns, let me know, I am here to help. I can be reached at [kcpawling@nirma.info](mailto:kcpawling@nirma.info) or 402-310-4417, call or text.

# **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS**

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

## **Caught In the Act**

This month's Safety Short will highlight two NIRMA members who were recently caught in the act of exemplifying safety, security, and collaborative partnerships in their respective counties.



Knox County Sheriff Don Henery has been protecting and serving his community for decades and is no stranger to being recognized by NIRMA for his outstanding efforts in loss prevention. I recently had the pleasure of traveling to scenic Knox County to provide CPR/First Aid/AED training to Sheriff's Office employees at the request of Head Jailer/Dispatcher Donna Hays. Upon my pre-dawn arrival on a snowy February morning, I immediately noticed the good condition of the Knox County courthouse grounds. They were well-lit; snow had been cleared from the parking lot and walkways with ice melt applied; and all exterior doors to the building were secured. I was quickly greeted over the intercom at the main entrance by a friendly Sheriff's Office dispatcher/jailer who let me in after verifying my identity using building security cameras.

Upon entering the Sheriff's Office, I immediately noticed that the building was well-kept, free of clutter, and equipped with modern technology. There was a clear separation between public and restricted areas achieved through physical barriers and locked doors. Sheriff Henery was one of the first to arrive for the class, took a front-row seat, and actively participated in all aspects of the training. Following the class, I had the pleasure of eating lunch with Sheriff Henery at the Red Door Grill across from the courthouse where a group of Knox County Commissioners had also gathered for lunch. Sheriff Henery made it a point to introduce me to the Commissioners, and it was clear from the friendly banter that he had established a positive relationship with the Board. Sheriff Henery also mentioned that he regularly attends County Board meetings to stay abreast of current issues and make himself available to the Board when questions or issues arise. Sheriff Henery also mentioned over lunch that he stays active by running and is hoping to beat his previous best time at the upcoming Trek Up the Tower stair climb race held at the First National Bank Tower in Downtown Omaha. After spending two days at the Knox County Sheriff's Office, it was clear that Sheriff Henery's servant leadership, commitment to building collaborative partnerships, and emphasis on safety are having a positive impact on employees at all levels of the organization. Nice work, Sheriff Henery!



February also included a trip to the Sheridan County courthouse and Sheriff's Office in Rushville, where I had the pleasure of meeting with Building Superintendent Jeff Davis. I pulled into the courthouse parking lot the morning after a significant snowfall with temperatures hovering at around -19 degrees. I immediately noticed the lot had been properly cleared of snow, Jeff was outside applying ice melt, and curiously the main sidewalk, ADA ramp, and steps leading to the main courthouse entrance were bone dry.

Upon meeting with Jeff, who has been with Sheridan County for about three years, he mentioned he had come in at 4:00 AM due to the weather to get a jump on snow removal and ensure the walkways were safe before the courthouse opened at 8:00 AM. Jeff went on to explain

that he was recently involved with the renovation of the walkway, ADA ramp, and stairs leading to the main courthouse doors, and as part of that project, they installed heating elements under the concrete to prevent ice formation and thus reduce slips and falls. Throughout my visit with Jeff, he was friendly, helpful, knowledgeable, and professional. It was clear he had a firm grasp on facility operations and was committed to working together with other county officials to promote safety and security at the Sheridan County courthouse. Well done, Jeff!