

# NIRMA

## BEST SAFETY PRACTICES FOR COUNTIES

### 1. **Adopt an effective safety manual.**

- Existing safety manual should be reviewed to determine if all items listed in the manual are clear, up-to-date and being enforced. Those items that aren't or will not be enforced should be modified or removed. If a safety manual has not yet been adopted by the county, one should be.
- The written safety manual should be distributed to all new employees, as well as existing employees. Supervisors should review the county safety policies with each and every employee and go through those parts of the manual that specifically apply to them. This is particularly true when new employees are hired and should be done prior to the employee beginning any work. Employees need to understand what is required of them from a safety standpoint. All training should be documented. There should be a pull-out page for the employee to sign acknowledging that he or she has received a copy of the manual.
- Within the safety manual, you should include a section on discipline for non-compliance with the content of the manual. The policy should include a three-tier approach that includes verbal warning, written warning, and then potential suspension/termination. An example of such discipline is:
  - First Level* - Verbal reprimand, documented with suggestions to prevent reoccurrence.
  - Second Level* - Written reprimand, documented with suggestion for improvement, including how the supervisor may provide assistance to the offending employee. This type of reprimand could impose up to three days off without pay.
  - Third Level* - Formal Corrective Action Meeting. A Job Performance report will be made a part of this meeting and corrective action, including time-off without pay or termination, will be a part of the conclusion of the meeting.

### 2. **Establish a safety committee and conduct regular meetings.**

- At a minimum, conduct regular quarterly safety committee meetings that comply with the statutory requirements created with the passage of LB757(1993) and the creation of the Nebraska Workplace Safety Consultation Program. Employees should be required to attend regular safety training meetings.
- A safety coordinator should be designated for the county. This person would be responsible for coordinating all safety activities. For multi-location job sites, one person should be designated at the lead safety person at each site.
- At an optimum, coordinate and establish an effective safety and health training program addressing job specific hazards.

### **3. Investigate all incidents and events.**

- A formal accident investigation should be conducted on all bodily injury or property damage incidents and events. This investigation should include the filling out of an incident/event investigation form by the injured employee's immediate supervisor and the employee. These completed investigation forms should be discussed at safety committee meetings. The incident/event investigation process is a method to determine why incidents occur, as well as what can be done to prevent them in the future.
- The First Report of Alleged Occupational Injury or Illness form should be completed for all work-related incidents.

### **4. Provide training to all employees, including supervisors, on a regular basis.**

- All supervisory staff should receive training in the duties of a supervisor. This training could include what is the overall supervisor's job, how to communicate with employees, how to change employee behavior, the true cost of incidents, and how to conduct safety training.
- All supervisory staff should be held accountable for safety within their area of responsibility. This is accomplished through a performance appraisal system that includes safety items as part of the appraisal.
- Employees that could be exposed to blood or other body secretions should be trained in how to handle this situation.
- All training should be documented.

### **5. Develop job descriptions for all positions.**

- You should review and update job descriptions, or develop them, for all jobs within the county. The description should specifically list the essential functions of the job.
- The job descriptions should contain a lifting requirement if applicable for the job. The lifting requirement should be no more than 50 pounds in accordance with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) guidelines. It is recommended that when an item exceeds 50 pounds, two people should be involved in the lifting or a lifting assist device be used.
- When an employee is injured, the employee's job description should be sent to the doctor so the doctor can understand completely what the job requirements are.

### **6. Provide pre-placement and post-placement physical exams.**

- All prospective employees should, after being conditionally offered a position, receive a pre-placement physical exam. This exam should include a functional test to determine flexibility, as well as employee's ability to lift the amount of weight specified in the job description.
- A psychological evaluation should be performed on all law enforcement/corrections applicants.
- All prospective county employees, after being offered the position, should receive a drug/alcohol screen.

## **7. Conduct regular motor vehicle record checks on all employees.**

- All new employees should have their motor vehicle record checked if they are to operate county vehicles or equipment. As an alternative, you can require that they provide a current copy (within the past 90 days) of their DMV record. This includes any volunteers and/or seasonal employees.
- All county employees should have their DMV record checked at least every three years, though annually is preferable. The following guidelines should be used to determine if a driver is acceptable. Questionable drivers should be required to take a defensive driving course, if otherwise acceptable:
  - A. Questionable Drivers
    - 1) Two “at fault” accidents in the latest three-year period; or
    - 2) Two moving violations in the latest three-year period; or
    - 3) One “at fault” accident and two moving violations in the latest three-year period; or
    - 4) Any driver who has a past driving record, regardless of time period, that indicates unsafe or irresponsible driving habits.
  - B. Unacceptable Drivers
    - 1) Three “at fault” accidents in the latest three-year period; or
    - 2) Three moving violations in the latest three-year period; or
    - 3) Any combination of “at fault” accidents and moving violations totaling three or more.
  - C. Special Review / Consideration

A DWI/DUI conviction. The date of this conviction should be a consideration. Each case should be evaluated on an individual basis.

## **8. Inspect all workplace sites on a regular basis.**

- All workplace sites should be inspected at least four times per year. This inspection should determine if there are any potential hazards to employees, as well as others who might come on-site. County employees that are not employees of the area being inspected or some other qualified third party should conduct the inspection.

## **9. Use appropriate safety equipment at all times.**

- All employees that have a potential exposure to head, eye, face and noise injuries should be required to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment and such equipment should be provided by the employer.
- Safety shoes should be required of those employees who have a potential exposure to foot injuries. There are several options regarding the funding of safety footwear, a few of which are listed here:
  - A. The employee pays all and must have a pair within a reasonable time of beginning employment.
  - B. The county pays for the initial pair (one-time payment)
  - C. The county pays a set dollar limit per year (\$50 as an example)
  - D. The county pays a set portion (50 percent as an example)

## **10. Follow nationally-recognized Safety Standards as a guide.**

- OSHA standards should be used as a guide in the training and continuous retraining of employees.