

The Official KMIT Member Resource

Vehicle Accidents Claim Three Workers' Lives Every Day: What Are You Doing To Prevent A Tragedy?

At some workplaces, when you pull into the parking lot, you will find someone standing out in the cold holding counters in each hand. On the back of one hand, he has written a big "Y". On the other, a big "N." That way he will know which counter to use when you pull in. If you are wearing your seatbelt, he clicks the "Y" hand. If not, he clicks the "N."

Believe it or not, that's how some employers establish a baseline to see if employees wear seatbelts when driving. Only by first establishing a baseline can employers raise awareness and set goals to increase employee participation in a seatbelt use program.

Why would an employer go to such great lengths to improve seatbelt use? One simple statistic springs to mind. From 1980 to 1992, motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of work-related deaths in the U.S., according to National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) figures.

Not only that, but the American workforce is reduced by three workers each day due to motor vehicle crashes. Approximately three U.S. workers die every day in a traffic-related motor vehicle crash.

The Problem Is Often Ignored

You would think such alarming statistics would motivate employers to find ways of reducing the risk of on-the-job traffic deaths, but, in fact, most employers don't seem to care. The three types of industries with the largest exposure to motor vehicle injuries are trucking, utilities and police departments. Outside of those industries it is rare to find traffic safety as part of a company's safety culture. "If you don't have to do something, it kind of falls off the radar screen," says Susan Herbel, executive director of the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), a public/private

organization that advocates traffic safety to employers.

Employers Don't Realize the Cost

Since there's no risk of being fined for a regulation violation, many employers don't focus their energy on reducing traffic accidents.

That's too bad, because employers with that attitude may not understand how much motor vehicle accidents cost their organizations. NETS estimates the annual cost to employers to be \$43.1 billion in health benefits, including workers' compensation, and non-fringe costs such as motor vehicle property damage.

Employers often don't recognize the total cost because they are divided among so many departments. Human resources takes care of the benefits, the legal department handles the liability costs, and purchasing buys new cars. "The departments often don't communicate with each other to put together the total cost of the accidents," Herbel notes.

"Another big reason employers don't see the drain on resources that motor vehicle accidents cause is because they are too used to focusing solely on workers' compensation costs," adds Herbel. An employer can look at insurance claim reports and tell how many accidents resulted in broken arms, but they can't tell how many of the broken arms were the result of traffic accidents.

Institute A Program To Increase Seatbelt Use

Using competition or some kind of incentive to help employees increase seatbelt use will pay big dividends. First, establish a baseline to determine how many of your employees regularly wear seatbelts and then build from there.

NIOSH recommends employers do the following to lower motor vehicle injury rates:

- Conduct driver's license background checks before hiring drivers.
- Provide vehicles with seatbelts for the driver and every passenger and require their use.
- Establish schedules that allow drivers enough time to obey speed limits and that limit driver's hours of service.
- Train drivers in safe driving practices and the proper use of vehicle safety features.
- Establish procedures to ensure proper maintenance of all vehicle systems.
- Make sure that newly-purchased vehicles are equipped with appropriate occupant protection and other safety features.
- Adopt the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations for commercial motor vehicle carriers as part of your motor vehicle safety program.

It Does Not Have To Be Complicated

The cure to the problem of high traffic accident rates is not "rocket science." Just because workers aren't driving company vehicles doesn't mean you should ignore driver safety. NETS estimates that 10% of all workers are effected by a motor vehicle crash at some point during the year. Just a few simple steps can help change that. Even if it means you have to stand out in the parking lot and paint letters on the back of your hand.

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CompControl is a publication of the League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Municipal Insurance Trust for the purposes of educating and informing cities about loss control methods and risk management. If you have any questions concerning KMIT workers' compensation or risk management that you would like to see answered in this newsletter, please direct those inquiries to:

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Letter from the Pool Administrator

Dear KMIT Members:

As your workers' compensation pool begins its sixth year of operation, there are two ongoing pool issues that I would like you to consider.

The first issue is that of contracted labor, particularly local businesses or individuals who have been hired by the City to perform a specific task. While some of these businesses, especially the larger ones, will carry workers' compensation on their employees, a small business or an individual seldom has such insurance coverage.

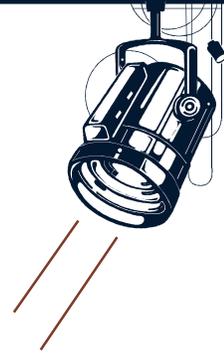
Your Board of Trustees strongly recommends that you require proof of workers' compensation insurance before any contract labor is performed for the City. The reason is simple: if a contract worker is injured while working for the City, your taxpayers more than likely will be liable for all costs related to that individual's medical payments and lost wages.

A number of KMIT members already require proof of workers' compensation insurance from all contract laborers. These members would tell you that small businesses and individuals are not happy when they are required to provide proof of workers' compensation coverage. But, they would also tell you that it makes good business sense for the City and all of their taxpayers.

If your City currently uses a volunteer fire department, we suggest that your Governing Body become acquainted with the workers compensation liability exposure of the city when its volunteers provide fire suppression services outside the City limits. If the City agrees to provide such services in the rural area, it should consider approaching the County about sharing the cost of workers compensation coverage for city volunteers who respond to fire calls in the rural area of the county. Remember, if an injury occurs, the liability follows the employing or appointing authority—not geographic location.

Please give these issues some thought since such incidents will adversely affect your City's annual premium and ultimately your pool.

Bernie Hayen
Pool Administrator



"Safe City" Spotlight on Abilene

The City of Abilene is located 89 miles west of Topeka on I-70. Abilene is a city of the 2nd class and has a population of 6,520. It also serves as the county seat for Dickinson county. There are 65 full-time city employees, 18 part-time employees, 50 seasonal employees and 8 volunteers. Abilene has been a valued member of KMIT since 1996.

The City of Abilene's Safety Committee is appointed by the city's department heads and each department has a member on the committee. The committee, which meets monthly, recommends approval or disapproval of new policies and changes to current safety policies.

The safety committee reviews accident reports and makes recommendations to management on ways to prevent repeat accidents. The inspection committee conducts semiannual inspections of each city department.

The City of Abilene's Safety Coordinator is James W. Davis, Public Safety Director of the Abilene Public Safety Department. Chief Davis makes field visits to work sites from time to time to assist department heads in their efforts to maintain a safe environment for city employees. The City of Abilene and the Safety Committee believe that if safety efforts are kept visible, everyone will practice them.

Abilene city employees participate in a wellness program at the local hospital fitness center and, as an incentive, the city pays a portion of each employee's membership. Safety Coordinator James Davis believes a fit employee will be less likely to sustain common sprains and muscle pulls while engaged in daily work activities.

Consistently striving to improve the city's safety record is a goal of the safety committee. Each department head is required to conduct a monthly inspection and report his or her findings to the committee. The safety coordinator conducts training on safety subjects three days per month which allows maximum employee attendance. Workshops are conducted by outside agencies, such as power and light companies and attendance is required. The city even conducts mock emergency drills from time to time to prepare for accidents.

The city also has a policy of finding temporary work for injured workers. This policy benefits both city and city employees. Employees are able to save sick days and at the same time save the city lost work time. "When an employee is injured and temporary work can be found, they are moved to that position," says Davis. The employees have appreciated the management's efforts and, in turn, morale improves.

In 1998, for the first time, Abilene received the Silver Star Award for participating in KMIT's Safety Olympics program. In addition, the city had no lost time accidents in 1998. "Employees know management not only talks the talk but they also walk the walk," states Jim Davis. The Safety Committee has set the Gold Star Award as their goal for 1999.

KMIT is proud to be able to recognize the City of Abilene for all its achievements and true commitment to safety in the workplace. Congratulations Abilene on all of your good work!

1998 Member Services Survey

The following is a summary of the results for the 1998 Member Services Survey. This survey is essential to the administrative staff of the Kansas Municipal Insurance Trust. It provides them with valuable insight into the pools areas of strengths, as well as its areas that may need improvement. Your KMIT Board of Trustees and the pool administrative staff wish to provide you with the best services available. Our appreciation goes to the 38 KMIT member cities that responded to the survey.

| KMIT. Workers' Compensation Insurance for Kansas Cities | Member Services Survey 1998 | | | |
|--|--|------|------|------|
| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
| The SolutionSessions® and Safety Manual Training sessions were conveniently located? | 2 | 13 | 4 | |
| The SolutionSessions® provided useful training with regard to work comp issues? | 10 | 16 | 1 | |
| Safety Manual Training sessions provided relevant and timely information? | 10 | 18 | | |
| Paul Davis, Risk Control, has been courteous and helpful? | 16 | 11 | | |
| Safety visits from IMA staff were productive and provided relevant information? | 10 | 17 | 17 | |
| KMIT's CompControl newsletter contained pertinent and useful information? | 10 | 24 | | |
| Teach Tools contained pertinent and useful information? | 19 | 13 | 12 | |
| IMA provided accurate and timely claims processing? | 16 | 10 | 2 | |
| IMA was courteous and helpful when called upon to answer questions? | 20 | 13 | | |
| League staff handles KMIT requests quickly and efficiently? | 18 | 15 | | |
| Overall, the city is pleased with the effectiveness of the pool? | 20 | 15 | | |

Claims

1999 Frequency and Cost Analysis—Top 5 1/1/99 through 2/4/99

By Job Classification

| Classification | Frequency | Claim Costs |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Police Officers & Drivers | 7 | \$ 405 |
| Municipal Employees | 4 | \$ 1,200 |
| Electric & Power Company Employees | 2 | \$ 4,050 |
| Firefighters & Drivers | 2 | \$ 400 |
| Waterworks Operators/Drivers/Salespersons | 2 | \$ 400 |

By Accident Type

| Type | Frequency | Claim Costs |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Falling or Slipping Injury | 10 | \$ 10 |
| Strain or Injury by Lifting, Carrying, Pushing, Etc. | 6 | \$ 6,050 |
| Electric Shock or Burn | 1 | \$ 400 |
| Heat/Cold/Burn/Scald | 1 | \$ 1,550 |
| Step On or Strike Against Object | 1 | \$ 400 |

By Part of Body

| Part of Body | Frequency | Claim Costs |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Head/Neck | 4 | \$ 1,200 |
| Hand | 4 | \$ 1,550 |
| Knee | 4 | \$ 5 |
| Low Back | 3 | \$ 800 |
| Ankle/Foot | 2 | \$ 0 |

Number of Claims Reported

Monthly December 1, 1998 to December 31, 1998 — 25 Claims reported
January 1, 1999 to February 4, 1999 — 11 Claims reported

Year to Date January 1, 1999 to February 4, 1999 — 11 Claims reported

Note—The above figures are based on claims reported as of 2/4/99. The figures are based on actual accident dates, not date reported. Amounts listed for claim costs are amounts incurred to date.

Your Pool in Action

Member Notes

Calendar of Events

- April**
16 KMIT Board Meeting, Atchison
- May**
TBA Solution Session, Basic Workplace Safety-Part I
- June**
18 KMIT Board Meeting
TBA Solution Session, Basic Workplace Safety-Part II
- July**
TBA Solution Session, Police Officer Training
- August**
27 KMIT Board Meeting
TBA Solution Session, Firefighter Training
- September**
TBA Solution Session, Confined Space
- October**
2 KMIT Golf Classic, Overland Park
3 KMIT Annual Meeting, Overland Park
TBA Solution Session, Trenching and Excavating
- November**
TBA Solution Session, Ergonomics
- December**
17 KMIT Board Meeting

Safety *success*

The following cities had not reported any claims in 1999 as of 2/4/99.

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| Altamont | Council Grove | Jetmore | Oswego |
| Andale | DeSoto | Kinsley | Ozawkie |
| Baldwin City | Eklhart | Lenora | Paola |
| Basehor | Esbon | Lucas | Princeton |
| Baxter Springs | Fowler | Maize | Ransom |
| Bel Aire | Frankfort | McFarland | Rose Hill |
| Beverly | Galena | Medicine Lodge | Russell |
| Bird City | Glasco | Melvorn | Sedan |
| Bison | Glen Elder | Minneapolis | Sedgwick |
| Bonner Springs | Goodland | Mission | Tescott |
| Brewster | Greeley | Moline | Tonganoxie |
| Centralia | Grenola | Montezuma | Treece |
| Chautauqua | Halstead | Mound City | Turon |
| Cheney | Hiawatha | Newton | Ulysses |
| Cherryvale | Hillsboro | Olpe | Wakefield |
| Concordia | Holcomb | Osage City | Walton |
| Conway Springs | Hoxie | Oskaloosa | Wamego |

K M I T

Revenues & Expenses
January 31, 1999

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Combined Balance Sheet | |
| Cash in Bank | 1,552,043 |
| Investments | 1,439,815 |
| Total Assets | 2,991,858 |
| Claims Payable | 26,057 |
| Reserved for Losses | 694,899 |
| Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) | 1,685,460 |
| Total Liabilities | 2,406,416 |
| KMIT Equity | 585,442 |
| Total Liabilities and Equity | 2,991,858 |

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