



# City Safe

A Guide To Assist In Training  
Employees About:

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## ***TRAINING SEASONAL WORKERS: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?***

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## TRAINING SEASONAL WORKERS: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

By Bret Glendening

Every year as cities begin to gear up for the spring and summer months, the issue of hiring seasonal employees becomes key in everyone's mind. The first question you often likely ask yourselves is, "do we need seasonal help this year?" (which is almost always answered with a "yes"). Secondly, you likely try to determine how many seasonal employees you are going to hire. This is based on the amount of work you have available. There are several other questions, however, that KMIT would like you to ask yourselves and your potential seasonal employees BEFORE you hire them.

One of these questions is, "have we hired this individual in the past?" If this individual is a rehire, then what were their responsibilities in the past? How well did they perform their duties? Did they perform them safely? If they did not work safely, why did they not work safely? KMIT certainly hopes that each of its cities takes the time and energy, and expends the resources to train your seasonal employees – EVEN IF, they've worked for you in the past. It is not enough to assume that the employee retained any of the safety training they learned last summer. In fact, they likely forgot everything you taught them because they do not perform this type of work, day in and day out. They've probably had school, athletics, and other extracurricular activities going on in their lives, and working safely in their summer job was the farthest thing from their minds, guaranteed. Also keep in mind, that there are safety videos available to KMIT members, through IMA. If you would like to check one out (free of charge), please contact Wendy Flowers ([wflowers@lkm.org](mailto:wflowers@lkm.org)). She will provide you with a list of available videos, and how to borrow them. Or, you may visit [www.kmit.net](http://www.kmit.net) for the list as well.

Another question that you should consider is this: "Does your city consider past experience with a seasonal employee when hiring?" Obviously you consider performance, but do you consider safety? You may have hired a very ambitious, hard working person to work on your street crew, or in your parks, but if that ambition comes at the price of safety, do you want to

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risk having this employee endanger themselves or your full-time employees? We certainly hope not. In the not-so-distant past, a city in KMIT hired a seasonal employee who was injured on the job and was off work long enough to collect lost wage benefits. The following season, this individual applied to, and was hired again by, the same city. This individual was injured yet again, and was off work long enough to collect lost wage benefits. Is this the type of seasonal employee YOU WANT? Hopefully not. In the end, this individual cost the city much more than the individual supplied in benefits. We recognize that many communities struggle to find seasonal help willing to work in the conditions that seasonal employees are asked to work in. We also realize that seasonal employees provide a much needed service to your city because they fill that “labor gap” between the amount of work that needs to get done, and the human resources that you as a city have to meet that demand. The bottom line is, seasonal employees in most cities are a necessity. From a safety and a subsequent workers’ compensation standpoint however, TRAINING IS AN EVEN GREATER NECESSITY.

A third and very obvious consideration that you should give to your hiring procedures is can the individual perform the jobs that you will be asking them to perform? The individuals you are hiring should be qualified as well as

capable of doing the jobs you are asking them to do. Lifeguards must be excellent swimmers. Street, park, and sanitation workers should be capable of meeting the physical requirements of these types of jobs. If you hire the wrong person for the job either unintentionally, or because you simply need to fill the position, then you are risking serious injury to that unqualified worker – it may even lead to death. Hiring seasonal employees should not be an exercise in “enlistment”. Being “ready, willing, and able” are good



qualities to have, but what are they ready, willing, and able, to do? Are you certain that the individual you’ve chosen to go mow acres of park land has the mental capacity to be out on a mower all day, with little human interaction? Can they pay attention for that amount of time, and always be aware of their surroundings? The point here is, everything, EVEN the little things, matter when you’re filling these positions.

A fourth and final question isn’t really a question, as it is something to remember about what we have discussed to this point. KMIT, along with IMA, completed a series of trainings on risk management and workers’ compensation issues in February (if you weren’t able to attend one, we’re sorry, you REALLY missed out; keep your eyes and ears open for the possibility of more in the future). At these seminars we discussed claims management techniques. These techniques

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begin even before you have a claim. They begin with hiring the right people for the job. Doing this reduces the risk of a claim before the person even starts working. Next, train the person on the equipment that they will be using and the jobs they will be performing. Teach proper lifting



and manual material moving techniques (among others). Here again is a simple way to reduce the risks of a claim before work even begins. Once work begins however, keep an eye on your seasonal employees. Just like anyone else, they will likely need positive reinforcement of the safety issues surrounding their jobs. Be prepared to take action if positive reinforcement doesn't work. You may need to keep an employee from using certain pieces of equipment (remember labor laws limit this already), transfer the employee to another, less

risky area (if available), or terminate the individual if they continue to display an inability to understand and follow safety rules. As the employer, it is your responsibility to keep your employees safe whether they are seasonal workers, or full-time employees. Reinforce with your supervisors their role in keeping the employees safe.

Understand that a claim can continue LONG AFTER a seasonal employee's work period has ended. You are not released from liability! As was true in the case mentioned above, the individual was collecting a check, and was no longer an employee of the city. This makes it even more difficult to track the progress of the person's recovery as well as ensure that they are abiding by their restrictions. Lastly, accidents do happen and they often arise out of a series of unforeseen events. If you have an injury to a seasonal worker and it develops into a serious injury, please remember to work closely with KMIT's claims representative, Victoria. Your role as an "accident preventer" has now been expanded to include claims manager. You should be staying informed about the status of all of your claims, however, with claims from this group of employees, it is an absolute must. We described in the aforementioned seminars that the cost of claims can spiral out of control without proper management of them from the city. As your workers' compensation insurance provider, we can only do so much. It is really up to you to be aware of the condition and status of this employee. Maintain contact with them. If possible, bring them to work temporarily with the city so you can more easily maintain contact with the employee. All of these things will assist you in driving down the costs associated with seasonal employees.

As always, KMIT is here to assist its member cities. Should you have any questions regarding this information, or questions in general, please contact me at: [bglending@lkm.org](mailto:bglending@lkm.org), or by phone at: 785/354-9565. You may also contact our Pool Administrator, Don Osenbaugh at: [dosenbaugh@cox.net](mailto:dosenbaugh@cox.net), or by phone at: 316/259-3847. For claims-specific inquiries, contact Victoria at: [victoria.vanderhoof@imacorp.com](mailto:victoria.vanderhoof@imacorp.com), or by phones at: 316/773-5234.

Please have a safe and productive Spring!

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## ***PROTECT YOUR HANDS WITH THE FOLLOWING TIPS***

Gloves are one of the best forms of protection. However, when working with moving machinery like drill presses, mills, lathes or grinders, there's a serious risk of getting the glove caught in the machinery and taking your hand along. Like most protective equipment the gloves you use must protect you against the particular hazard. Here is a sampling of the types of gloves to use for various hazards:

- Insulated gloves are designed to protect you against heat or cold. If you work around open flames, the fabric should be fire-retardant. For radiant heat, gloves should be reflective. Leather may be effective for working around hot surfaces and cotton may be sufficient if the degree of heat or cold isn't too high.
- Special insulated rubber gloves are required around electricity.
- Metal mesh or other cut-resistant gloves are best for handling sharp objects.
- Leather gloves are the best for rough surfaces.
- Fabric gloves are good when handling slippery objects.
- Neoprene or nitrile rubber gloves are needed when working with corrosives.

When working with chemicals, check the MSDS to determine the best glove choice. This is not a decision to make casually. Ensure the gloves you use provide quality protection and won't react in a dangerous way to the chemicals.

### *Machine and Tool Protection*

Guards are the best protection from getting hands or fingers caught and injured by tools and machines. See to it that guards stay in place and that lockout/tagout procedures are performed whenever a machine is shut down for repairs. Power tools are equipment with guards. Make sure they're in place and working properly or discontinue use of the equipment.

### *Safety Procedures*

All the guards and gloves in the world won't protect you unless you take responsibility for performing your job in a safe and sensible way that keeps your hands out of harm's way. When working with tools, machinery, and chemicals your whole attention is required. If your mind and eyes are somewhere else, accidents happen. Focus totally on the job you're doing. Listed are a few safety basics:

- Follow manufacturer and company instructions for using tools and equipment.
- Feed materials into moving machinery with a push stick, not your hands.
- Keep your hands away from moving machinery parts and always cut away from your body.
- Use brushes, not hands, to sweep up metal or wood chips.
- Check materials for sharp edges, burrs, splinters, etc., before handling.
- Make sure you know how hot or cold an object is before handling it.
- Wipe off greasy or slippery objects before handling them.
- Lift an object so your hands are clear of the pinch point.
- Store tools so no sharp edges are exposed.
- Pass - don't throw - tools to co-workers.

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# **KMIT Training Sessions a HUGE Success!**

KMIT and the League “co-sponsored” a series of Supervisor Seminars in February. The KMIT “training team” (Don Osenbaugh and Bret Glendening [KMIT], Victoria Vanderhoof [IMA], and Marcia Payne [Precept/CorVel]) presented 1/2-day sessions on the specifics of work comp management, and were joined by Dave McKinney (IMA), who presented similar 1/2-day sessions covering risk management for supervisors. A total of 163 supervisors attended at least one 1/2-day session (only a few did not attend both sessions). The series stops were in Hutchinson (where 32 KMIT and 25 “non-KMIT” supervisors attended); Newton (45 KMIT and 4 other), and Winfield (13 KMIT; 44 other). We hope to be able to do another round of “sub-regional” sites next winter, as well as perhaps, several sometime later this year. If your city is interested in the possibility of hosting a training site on these topics, please contact KMIT Pool Administrator Don Osenbaugh at [dosenbaugh@cox.net](mailto:dosenbaugh@cox.net) or 316/259-3847.

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