



# City Safe

A Guide To Assist In Training  
Employees About:

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## ***GEARING UP FOR THE SPRING & SUMMER MONTHS***

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## GEARING UP FOR SPRING AND SUMMER

By Bret Glendening

Springtime brings many new hazards to your employees. What does your city do to control the risks that these hazards present to your employees? In this issue of *City Safe*, Dennis Quiring, Risk Manager for the City of Newton describes some of the procedures that they go through in preparation for the busy spring and summer months for street maintenance and repair.

KMIT urges each member city to assess the jobs that the coming months will bring to its employees. What types of equipment will be used? Has that equipment sat idle all winter long? Chance are, these pieces of equipment *have* sat idle, and with that idleness comes the need for tune-ups and inspections. Check to ensure that these tools are in proper working order. Equally important in this process is an assessment of employee knowledge of the equipment. Have you hired any new employees? Could your “seasoned” employees use a refresher course on how to safely operate chain saws, mowers, graders, etc? If we were to venture a guess, we would guess that the answer is YES! All of your employees, new or not, will benefit from a day (or even a half day) spent reminding themselves of the importance of following recognized safety practices when using these pieces of equipment.

Take for instance this story from Maryland (April of 2004). A Carroll County road operations employee was **KILLED** when a tree limb struck him on the head. He **WAS WEARING** a hard hat. This employee and a couple of his co-workers were trimming trees when a branch fell to the ground, striking the employee. This accident is currently being investigated by the state’s Occupational Safety and Health Department. The employee began his career with Carroll County in 1987.

This story tells us a couple of things. First of all, it tells us that accidents are not limited to new hires. It also tells us that even though an employee is using personal protective equipment, he/she is not immune from injury or death on the job. So **PLEASE**, even though most safety videos can be laboriously boring to watch, and most employees will grumble and grouse about watching them, they serve a purpose. They work to reinforce those little things that can easily be forgotten. Little things like paying attention and making sure you’re standing far enough away from someone who is in a bucket truck, cutting out tree limbs.

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## Seasonal Safety – Gearing Up Street Repair for the Spring & Summer Months

By Dennis Quiring, Risk Manager, City of Newton

Spring brings with it a renewed intensity of construction and repairs to city streets. The weather has created potholes, damaged marking paint, and crumbled curbs. Sometimes, other utilities have damaged the roadway while doing repairs and now it is time to fix that damage. Signage that needs repair or replacement is sometimes left to this busy season.

Adding to the mix of higher work loads in street repair is the complication of the general driving public not being mentally prepared after several months of not seeing the guys in orange. “Give ‘Em A Brake” sometimes occurs a little late under these circumstances. Sudden increases in temperature increase the dangers of heat exhaustion. Supervisors need to keep in mind that many cases of heat exhaustion occur in the spring before workers are acclimated to the weather. Equipment that hasn’t been used for several months follows “Murphy’s Law” and breaks at inopportune times. This also includes safety equipment.

Getting ready for the busy season should include:

- Taking an inventory of your safety equipment and PPE. An orange vest that’s brown from age is like having no safety vest at all. Swap it out and make sure that other PPE is in good shape.
- Checking first aid kits. Replace items with broken packaging, and restock if necessary.
- A review of your department’s policies regarding safety in work zones with all employees.
- Checking the general condition of both hand and power tools.
- Checking hydraulic and pneumatic equipment for leaks and replacing worn hoses.

This is far from a comprehensive list. The key is to have a checklist of your own and follow it.

Before work starts:

- Walk the job. Identify special hazards.
- Will there be open trenches, low hanging power lines, or poor visibility due to trees needing trimmed?
- List your specialty equipment and the people you need to operate that equipment.
- Make sure you’ve got enough signs, cones, and barricades to do the job.
- Consider the best time of day to do certain parts of the job regarding traffic patterns, schools opening and closing, etc.



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- Make a basic job plan including emergency procedures.
- Scout the area for emergency shelter should a Tornado Warning be issued.
- Review the job plan with crews. **NOW IS THE TIME FOR A 5-MINUTE SAFETY TALK WITH THE CREWS.**
- Log your efforts and plans - especially the safety talk. Keep good records.

When city crews are working in a public thoroughfare during construction or maintenance projects, the following general principles need to be observed:

- Notify 911 dispatch, Police, Fire, and EMS of street closings or extensive repairs.
- If an open cut is left in a traffic lane when work is stopped or suspended, provide a steel plate cover strong enough to sustain normal traffic. Use barricades as per your department's policy.
- Provide a safe pedestrian walkway when appropriate.
- Don't create unnecessary obstructions of vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
- Provide an adequate channel for traffic using cones as delineators. The following graph illustrates one way of channeling traffic. Use your city's standard operating procedure.

Speed Limit	Length of Taper With 10' Offset (ft)	Length of Taper With 12' Offset (ft)	Maximum Spacing between Channelizing Devices (ft)
25	104	125	25
30	150	180	30
35	204	245	35
40	267	320	40
45	450	540	45
50	500	600	50
55	550	660	55

Changing your seasonal type of work, as well as increasing hours, has a definite effect on the probability of injury and/or accident. Preparing for these changes reduces that risk. Last but not least, don't forget to keep up the records of your public works projects.

For further reading, please visit:

- Kansas Department of Transportation Safety Page  
<http://www.ksdot.org/burtrafficsaf/index.html>



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## SPRING CLEANUP - TREE TRIMMING SAFETY TO KEEP IN MIND

Springtime in Kansas brings many things. Among these are a need to get outside and enjoy the fresh air and warmer temperatures. Spring also brings storms and strong winds (and, unfortunately, even tornadoes). After a long winter, trees always need trimming – whether done by humans or nature, broken branches and fallen limbs must be disposed of. Excess growth into power lines also presents a problem, particularly if these limbs come to rest (or are in risk of resting) on a power line, in the event of a storm. This section will highlight some of the issues that should be addressed to protect workers when trimming trees and cutting branches above ground. **PLEASE REVIEW THE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003 CITY SAFE – ON CHAINSAW SAFETY.** To reinforce this point, we begin with a couple of case studies.

The first case involves an electric distribution line technician and a groundsman who were assigned the task of clearing tree branches from a 7,200 volt primary power line following a storm. Because of the location of the power line, the use of an aerial bucket truck was restricted. The problem area was identified and preparations were made to clear the branches from the power line. A fused switch was opened on a pole-mounted transformer to de-energize the power line, but the line remained energized from the electrical source through another transformer. The victim climbed the tree, apparently lost his balance, fell onto the power line, and was electrocuted.



A second case involves a tree trimmer who was removing a large oak tree from a private residence. The trimmers elected to remove the top limbs first, before felling the rest of the tree. The victim in this story climbed the tree using a body harness, tree climbers, and a climbing cradle (a length of rope that is placed around the tree and snapped to D-rings on each side of the body harness). The victim also had a tool rope hanging from the harness to raise and lower tools. The climbing cradle helped hold the climber in place while he made his cuts with the chainsaw. When the victim was nearly finished with the third fork, a co-worker noticed a rope falling to the ground. He looked up to watch the climber fall 65 feet to his death. An investigation of this accident revealed that the connectors on both ends of the climbing cradle had been fastened with wire and electrical tape. The rope apparently pulled loose when the victim leaned back to make a cut. The connector was still attached to the D-ring on the harness.

There are literally HUNDREDS of examples like these two cases. In the electrocution case, clearly the “de-energized” line was still hot. Properly checking the line to ensure that it was not hot could have saved a life. The second scenario is equally unfortunate. Utilizing equipment that should have been discarded cost another life. I’m sure that if they were given the chance to do this again, they would gladly have spent the comparably small “pocket change” for a new harness in return for this man’s life.

How can you protect your workers from frivolous and tragic accidents such as these? Here is a list. Please treat these as **required**, and not optional, suggestions when you send your crews out this spring and summer.

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- Conduct an initial and daily jobsite survey before beginning work—to identify hazards and implement appropriate safety controls. (i.e. Where are overhead power lines? What condition is the ground in? Is it soggy and/or muddy? Are there uneven spots?)
- Assume that all power lines are **HOT**, and avoid contact (either direct or indirect) until it is verified that the lines are safe.
- Maintain safe working distances from energized conductors. Safe distances range anywhere from 2 feet to 15 feet, depending on the voltage of the line.
- Use **ONLY** non-conductive tools, materials, and PPE's.
- If you **MUST** work around power lines and absolutely **CANNOT** turn them off, get the lines grounded or otherwise shielded and treat the lines as if they were neither grounded nor shielded.
- Inspect trees and limbs for structural weakness before climbing or cutting.
- Use appropriate fall protection equipment.
- Inspect all equipment before each use to ensure that it is not damaged, defective, or inappropriately “engineered”.
- Use safe work procedures to prevent inadvertent cutting of climbing ropes, lanyards, and safety belts or straps.
- Use common sense when climbing, felling, topping, and pruning trees.
- Ensure that employees required to operate mobile equipment (such as bucket trucks) have been properly trained.
- **TRAIN ALL** employees on the use of safety equipment, chainsaws, etc.

LASTLY, if you have ANY questions about ANY safety procedures, do not hesitate to contact Dave McKinney at: [david.mckinney@imacorp.com](mailto:david.mckinney@imacorp.com) or Chris Retter at: [chris.retter@imacorp.com](mailto:chris.retter@imacorp.com) with IMA. They are both excellent resources!

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