



# City Safe

A Guide To Assist In Training  
Employees About:

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## ***SEASONAL EMPLOYEES THE BENEFITS AND RISKS***

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By now, we all know the value of having seasonal employees. These employees provide a much needed service to our cities. Obviously, utilizing these workers is important if we want to stay on top of things during the summer months. We just don't have enough manpower to keep up with all the demands during the summer months. The grass is going to grow, and either we stay on top of it, or our city's image suffers. There are, however, a few issues you should consider when hiring seasonal workers.

First of all, before you hire a person back from a previous season, find out what kind of an employee they were. If there were problems before, most likely there will be problems again. Just because an employee is seasonal, you shouldn't hold them to lower standards than your normal employees. You wouldn't want a full-time employee to return if they were not productive. The same should apply to a seasonal employee. A bad worker is a bad worker, no matter their length of employment.

Secondly, and the most obvious question, is "can the employee perform the duties they will be assigned?" Most often when you think about a person's ability to perform a job, you think about their physical ability. However, we often forget that there is a mental aspect to all jobs. Just because someone is physically able to perform a job doesn't mean that they always think everything through and follow safety procedures and guidelines. The majority of seasonal workers will be doing jobs that utilize some form of power equipment. When safety procedures with this equipment are tossed aside, serious injuries happen. Not only can someone endanger themselves, but also coworkers and bystanders.

As we all know, seasonal employees are just that, seasonal. However, if they are injured on the job, they are entitled to



all work comp benefits (the same as full-time employees) and these benefits do not end at the end of the "season". Work comp benefits will continue until the claim is closed. Obviously, this is not an ideal situation. If the employee has no intention of returning the following

year, they have little incentive to “get better”. This is why KMIT constantly stresses the importance of hiring the right person, even for “seasonal” positions.

Of course, we realize that often these seasonal positions are hard to fill. Undesirable work conditions, along with limited applicants, can sometimes make filling these positions a challenge. However, you should do what you can to limit the exposure of the city. When you hire the right person for the job, train them accordingly, and supervise them appropriately, you can help limit the chance of an accident and a work comp exposure.

## **Some Quick Tips On How To Get Your Seasonal Employees To Return:**

### **ASK YOUR EMPLOYEES**

At the end of the season, find out if your employees plan to come back or not, and ask why. Conduct an exit interview to see if you can gather intelligence about what you might do to increase the number of employees returning.

### **KEEP IN TOUCH WITH SEASONAL EMPLOYEES ALL YEAR ‘ROUND**

Keep an updated list of your seasonal employees and make them feel like part of the team year round by keeping in touch with them during the “off season”. Send them a note, a city newsletter, or holiday greetings and encourage them to keep you informed of their whereabouts. Also, don’t rule out employees who worked for you two or even three years ago. As long as they are good employees there is no reason you can’t utilize them.

### **COLLABORATE WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY**

Tap into other resources that already exist in the community. Maybe there is another seasonal employer with whom you can share employees. High schools and colleges are always a good resource with many students looking for employment, especially during the summer.

### **GIVE EMPLOYEES INCENTIVES TO COME BACK**

Obviously, the easiest way to get an employee to return is to pay a higher salary. But there are other ways to keep seasonal employees coming back, without affecting the budget. For example, providing an employee with an increased supervisory role or additional responsibilities can create an increased feeling of self worth and may increase the likelihood of their return.

### **Working Safely While Trimming Trees**

We all know that springtime in Kansas brings warmer temperatures and sunny skies, but unfortunately it also brings severe weather. These storms (along with ice storms from winter) can leave



the trees in our cities looking pretty rough. Eventually, these trees must be trimmed to prevent damage to power lines, other trees, or the public. So before you climb into that aerial bucket or climb that ladder, remember a few of these tips for safely trimming trees.

- Obtain training on proper tree cutting and trimming (nobody likes a butchered tree).
- If an aerial bucket truck or other boomed vehicle is used, ensure that the operators are trained in the safe operation of these vehicles.
- Before trimming a tree, inspect the area to identify possible hazards (e.g., presence of power lines, broken or cracked limbs after a severe storm) and take appropriate actions to prevent injuries or accidents.
- Assume any power lines are energized or “hot”. Avoid any direct or indirect contact with the power line until the utility company has verified that the line has been de-energized.
- Mark off an area around the tree and prevent bystander access. Always work with another person who stays on the ground.
- Learn to recognize trees weakened by disease and types of trees prone to cracking.
- Inspect tree limbs for strength before climbing. Check for cavities in the tree, rotten or dead branches, splits and cracks in the trunk, or where branches are attached, broken branches hanging in the tree, etc.
- Inspect the fall protection equipment and lines each time before they are used. Tag and remove any damaged or defective equipment from service until it can be repaired or replaced and disposed of properly, according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.
- If a ladder is used, tie it off on a secure branch.
- Use approved and appropriate fall protection gear when working above ground including when working from a ladder or platform.
- Break small dead branches off by hand as you climb. Remove larger branches with proper tools.
- Place hands and feet on separate limbs and move only one hand or foot at a time.
- Raise or lower tools by attaching hand lines to the end of tools. Tools attached at the center might catch on branches. Smaller tools may be raised and lowered in a bucket attached to a hand line.



- Use nonconductive tools and personal protective equipment if working near electrical power lines.
- Be sure that you can see the cut you are making so you do not cut hand lines, safety ropes, etc. unintentionally.
- Attach a composite or leather guard on saws that are held by a ring on a worker's belt.



## *Safe-T-Tips*

### Focus on those who “hate their jobs”

You may have suspected it all along, but here's proof:

Studies show people who “hate their jobs” are injured more often. What to do? Don't pay workers' comp to malcontents. Instead, focus extra training efforts on this at-risk group.

### Try this one - two training combo

Research shows lectures are the cheapest, most common and least effective training method. Hands-on demonstration to a small group, or one-on-one, beat out lecturing every time. Best bet: Combine the two.

## **Another Good Year for KMIT Training Sessions!**

Just as in previous years, KMIT and the League “co-sponsored” a series of supervisor trainings throughout the month of February. Again, these trainings were split into half-day sessions. Chris Retter (IMA) instructed the morning session and covered risk control for the supervisor. In the afternoon, Victoria Vanderhoof (IMA) along with Don Osenbaugh and Mark Morris (KMIT) discussed the specifics of work comp management. A total of 109 supervisors attended at least one ½ day session. The stops on this year’s tour were in Clay Center (Feb. 10), Iola (Feb. 17) and Garden City (Feb. 24). We hope to do another series of “sub-regional” trainings again next year. If your city would like to host one of these events, please contact Don Osenbaugh at [dosenbaugh@cox.net](mailto:dosenbaugh@cox.net) or (316) 258-3847.

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