



City Safe

A Guide To Assist In Training
Employees About:

May / June
2007

Seasonal and Youth Workers

Number 34

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City Safe is a publication of the League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Municipal Insurance Trust for the purpose of educating and informing cities about loss control methods and risk management. Contents herein are not intended to provide specific legal or medical advice. Readers should seek advice on specific concerns from a qualified professional.

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SEASONAL AND YOUTH WORKERS: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Some of you are already in the process of evaluating applicants for your seasonal positions. Many of those seasonal employees will be students that want to earn some income and gain work experience. This annual activity may not receive the attention it deserves. KMIT would like to take this opportunity to ask you to pause and consider several questions. We have discussed this in prior issues of *City Safe*, but it bears reviewing.

Seasonal Workers and Safety

The first question you often 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 always based on the amount of work you have available and funding. 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 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.

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 risk having this employee endanger themselves or your full-time employees? We certainly hope not. In the not-so-distant past, a KMIT city hired a

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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. And yet again, this individual was injured 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 caused the city to incur many more costs 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 workers’ compensation standpoint, however, TRAINING IS AN EVEN GREATER NECESSITY.

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. KMIT along with IMA recently 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, but keep your eyes and ears open for the possibility of more in the future). At these seminars, we discussed claims management techniques. These techniques 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 disallow 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 the rules.

Lastly, understand that if a claim does occur, even if the employee’s season is over, does not absolve you or KMIT from the claim. As was 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.

Youth Workers and Their Restrictions

Although this is a topic that the League covers at our personnel Municipal Leadership Academy sessions, it is a good idea to review these restrictions as you consider how you use those summer hires.

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First and foremost, train your staff and the youth workers on what is allowed and what is not. A review of the restrictions may save your city a fine and a young employee an injury. The worst possible result is a combination of both.

Age 14 and under

The only allowable employment for this group in a city is as a youth athletic program referee and has the consent of a parent or guardian. Be sure to train this group on basic first aid for any injuries to sports participants.

Ages 14-15

This group has significant restrictions, but is able to work in an environment such as a pool snack bar and may cook without an open flame, use a microwave, and a deep fat fryer that automatically raises and lowers the basket.

This group may **not** drive motor vehicles, mowers, or other power driven machinery. They cannot be on ladders or perform any maintenance work.

It is also important to be aware of restrictions on the number of hours these summer employees may work. During the summer they may not work before 7 a.m. or after 9 p.m., more than 40 hours per week, or more than eight hours in a 24-hour period.

Ages 16-17

Although there are fewer restrictions for this age group, there are still a few to note. Kansas regulations allow work in all jobs that have not been declared hazardous by the secretary of labor. The list is not comprehensive, but here are a few tasks to avoid for 16 and 17 year olds.

They should not drive a motor vehicle or be an outside helper on a motor vehicle. Federal regulations prohibit all 16 and 17 year old drivers with restrictions including a requirement for driver's education, daylight hours operation only, work within 30 miles of the employment location, the car or truck must be equipped with seat belts, and be under 6,000 pounds. Needless to say, a valid driver's license is required.

They may not use power driven machinery including saws and hoisting equipment. They may never work with explosives, firearms, or ammunition. Additionally, they may not work in roofing, demolition, manufacturing, or excavation operations. This means you cannot have a summer youth member of your water or wastewater repair crew.

Finally, make sure that you monitor any youth work assignments and activities. A written schedule of tasks with specific assignments can help keep everyone clear on acceptable duties.

Naturally, if any seasonal or youth employee is injured, they are covered by KMIT. Follow your standard procedures for reporting and treating injuries. Please make sure your supervisors are aware of these procedures and your seasonal employees know who to report any injury to. **HAVE A SAFE SUMMER!**

PORTABLE LADDER SAFETY

Recently, we were reviewing the types and severity of claims in the first quarter. Look for detailed information in the next issue of *Comp Control*. But, as a sneak preview, the top spot in both categories are injuries from falling or slipping. No doubt many of these were due to the difficult weather conditions with ice and slick surfaces.

One potential area for both types of injuries is the use of portable ladders. The IMA safety video library has four short films on ladder safety that are well worth your time to use for training. The longest is just over 15 minutes and any of these would be a great topic for toolbox training.

There is also a very good publication on ladder safety created by the state of Oregon. You can find it at www.orosha.org/pdf/pubs/3083.pdf. Here are just two of the topics that are covered in much more detail.

Five Steps for Setting up an Extension Ladder

1. The ladder should be closed. Position the ladder with base section on top of the fly section. Block the bottom of the ladder against the base of the structure.
2. Make sure there is clearance and no electrical lines are overhead. Carefully “walk” the ladder up until it is vertical. Keep your knees bent slightly and your back straight.
3. Firmly grip the ladder, keep it vertical, and carefully move back from the structure about one quarter the distance of the ladder’s working length. This allows you to place it at the correct angle against the structure.
4. Raise the fly section. After the bottom rung of the fly section clears the bottom rung of the base section, place one foot on the base rung for secure footing.
5. Lean the ladder against the structure. The distance from the base of the ladder to the structure should be one quarter the distance of the ladder’s working length. Make sure the ladder extends 3 feet above the top support points for access to a roof or other work level. Both rails should rest firmly and securely against the structure.



Safe Practices Checklist

- When portable ladders are used for access to an upper landing, the side rails extend at least 3 feet above the upper landing. When this is not possible, the ladder is secured to a rigid support at its top and a grab rail is available to help employees get off the ladder.

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- Ladders are free of oil, grease, and other hazards that could cause slips.
- Ladders are not loaded beyond the manufacture's duty rating.
- Ladders are used only for the purpose for which they were designed.
- Extension ladders are placed so that the working length of the ladder is four times the horizontal distance from the ladder's base to the structure—a 4:1 ratio.
- Ladders are used on stable, level surfaces or they are secured so that they cannot be displaced.
- Ladders are not used on slippery surfaces unless they are secured or they have slip resistant feet.
- All ladders, except stepladders, have non-slip feet.
- Employees are prohibited from placing ladders on boxes, barrels, and other unstable objects.
- Ladders used near passageways, doorways, or driveways are protected so that vehicles or pedestrians do not strike them.
- The area around the top and bottom of a ladder is free from slipping and tripping hazards.
- The top of a non-shelve-supporting ladder is placed so that both rails are supported equally.
- Ladders are not moved, shifted, or extended when they are occupied.
- Ladders that could contact exposed energized electrical equipment have nonconductive side rails.
- Portable aluminum ladders have legible signs reading "CAUTION: Do Not Use Around Electrical Equipment" or equivalent wording.
- The top step of a stepladder is not used as a step.
- Cross bracing on the rear section of a stepladder is not used for climbing unless the ladder is designed for that purpose.
- Employees are prohibited from using ladders that are missing steps, rungs, cleats, or have broken side rails or other faulty parts.
- A competent person inspects ladders periodically for defects and after any occurrence that could damage them.
- Defective ladders are marked as defective, or are tagged "Do Not Use" and removed from service until they are repaired.
- Repaired ladders meet their original design criteria before they are returned to service.
- Employees face ladders while climbing or descending.
- Employees use at least one hand to grasp the ladder when they are climbing and descending.
- Employees do not carry objects or leads that could cause them to lose their balance.
- Employees who use ladders receive training by a competent person in proper use, placement, and handling.
- Employees know the hazards associated with ladder use and follow procedures that minimize the hazards.
- Retraining is provided periodically to ensure that employees maintain their knowledge of proper ladder use, placement, and handling.

QUICK TIP FOR SAFETY TRAINING

Informal safety training, or toolbox talks as it is sometimes called, can be an effective way to remind your staff about how to perform a task or use equipment safely.

Here are a couple of tips to make these informal sessions effective:

- The sessions should be 15 minutes or less and take place at the appropriate job site.
- Focus the talk on 3 to 5 main safety issues for a specific job or piece of equipment.
- Hold the sessions regularly so they become a part of a commitment to safety.
- Encourage participation and let your most knowledgeable employee conduct the training for equipment.
- Focus on the good and bad, for example, safety problems as well as jobs well done.
- Keep a record of these sessions including date, time, place, and who attended.

PERSONAL ERGONOMICS

What is Ergonomics? Ergonomics is the science of matching tools and tasks to the work environment. In other words, ergonomics tries to make your job fit *you*, rather than making *you* fit your *job*. The purpose of ergonomics is to reduce or eliminate injuries and illnesses that can result from stress on muscles, nerves, and joints. These types of injuries have been common to workplaces for a long time, but safety standards concerning them are new.

A variety of ergonomically-related injuries take place and a variety of terms exist to describe them. The most common terms used are musculoskeletal disorders or cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs). They are also known as repetitive motion or stress disorders. Whatever they're called, they account for approximately one-half of all reported workplace illnesses each year. These are technically called "illnesses" because the problems generally build up over time, rather than being the result of a single event, as in the case of an accident.

Physical Problems from Cumulative Trauma: These usually involve pain and damage to muscles, tendons, and nerves in the back, neck, shoulders, wrists, hands, and elbows. Discomfort can be mild and periodic, or long lasting. Typical ailments include: Tendonitis, Tennis Elbow, Trigger Finger, lower back pain, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome which causes hands and wrists to tingle or become numb, and Reynaud's Syndrome which causes fingers to become white.

Disorders can be caused by making the same motion over and over, staying in one position too long, or working in awkward positions. They also result from working with tools that don't fit the body, using a great deal of physical force, and exposure to long periods of heavy vibration.

How to Avoid Discomfort: Ergonomically related disorders occur to all types of workers, from laborers to office personnel. You can often help yourself by learning and practicing basic ergonomic principles. There are many ways to reduce or eliminate the disorder; here are a few:

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- Use two hands instead of one for a task—to reduce excess demand on a single muscle group.
- Use tools that are right for the job and proportioned for your body.
- Use power tools instead of manual tools when possible.
- Take frequent breaks from repetitive motion tasks.
- Avoid repeating awkward movements or holding yourself in awkward positions.
- Wear protective gloves that reduce pressure or tool vibration on your fingers.
- For computer use—keep the screen 12 to 18 inches from your face and just below eye level.
- Position the keyboard so that your wrists are straight and your elbows are close to your body.
- Change positions, stretch often to improve blood circulation, and take breaks regularly.

Report Early Symptoms: Repetitive motion injuries are a growing concern in the workplace. Anyone who experiences numbness, tingling, or pain in their hands, arms, or neck should seek the advice of a supervisor. Changes in work stations and equipment can often alleviate these problems before they become chronic, and medical attention should be sought if the problem persists. Following this simple advice can help eliminate physical stress and keep employees feeling good all day.

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