

<http://www.admin.state.mn.us/risk>

# ALERT



## Director's Column

by Liz Houlding

First-year MnSAFE goal achieved!

The numbers have been crunched and it's official: state government achieved the first-year MnSAFE injury reduction goal of 5 percent. MnSAFE, Governor Dayton's statewide injury reduction initiative, requiring state agencies to reduce workplace injuries by 25 percent within three years, was launched at last year's Safety & Loss Control Conference. The statewide workers' compensation claim incident rate (number of accepted claims per 100 FTEs) is down for FY2012 from 4.11 to 3.86, resulting in 195 fewer injuries to state employees. Agency-specific results are available on the [www.mn.gov/mnsafe](http://www.mn.gov/mnsafe) website.

Two exceptional examples of injury reduction efforts were spotlighted during this year's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual

Safety & Loss Control Conference opening session. Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB), who had already achieved a 53 percent reduction in their workers' compensation claim incident rate from FY2007-FY2011, ended FY2012 at 1.78 claims per 100 FTE, which is 50 percent less than their final MnSAFE reduction goal of 3.6. Alexandria Technical College, who measures OSHA incident rates, reported a DART Rate (Days Away, Restricted, or Job Transfer) of 0.0 for 2011 and a Total Recordable Incident Rate of 0.9 injuries per 100 FTEs with nearly 500,000 hours worked! Congratulations to these two organizations!

Much remains to be done,

however, to achieve the overall 25 percent reduction goal! Agencies should be working to achieve a 10 percent reduction by the conclusion of FY2013, with the full 25 percent reduction realized by the conclusion of FY2014. If your agency is struggling to achieve its reduction goal and you would like to discuss safety and loss control, please contact Todd Christenson, our Safety and Loss Control Manager: [todd.christenson@state.mn.us](mailto:todd.christenson@state.mn.us) or by phone at 651-201-3005.

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## Winter Preparedness

by Scott Johnson, Claims Manager

It's that time of year again. White things are falling from the sky and cold temperatures are creating ice outside. Once snow and ice get tracked inside they turn back into water, creating an unsafe condition.

Since ice, snow, and water can create dangerous conditions both inside and outdoors, increased diligence is required this time of year. Take extra precautions by reviewing removal plans and salting procedures and by setting up salt buckets before the snow falls (make certain that everyone can use them). Also, verify that floor mats are in good condition and post signs to warn of wet floors.

Your attention to these details will be appreciated by those who use your facilities.

# Putting the “FUN” Back Into Your “Functional” Safety Committee

by Carol Magurany-Brotski

To be an **effective** safety committee, it is important that your committee is **functional**. The word **functional** is defined as *having a practical application or serving a useful purpose*. Yet the word “functional” has a word within it that is often overlooked, but very necessary towards your committee’s effectiveness. The word is **“FUN.”** “**FUN**” is defined as something that *provides enjoyment*. So, does your agency have a functional safety committee meeting? Are the committee meetings fun and serving a useful purpose?

Here is an example of some “tweets” that were shared from a safety committee meeting. (Reference: *Another Hour of Blah-Blah-Blah? Engaging Your Safety Committee*, by David O’Boyle, CSP, and OHST ASSE Atlanta, GA May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012.)

**Malibu:** *I'm ready to light my face on fire because I'm so bored – I am in a stupid meeting because some (bleep) nominated me to be on the ‘oh so fun’ safety committee and it’s all really dummbbb -- I'm eating a piece of good chocolate though!*

**Cake5550:** *Just nod a few times and say ‘that’s right’ – they will think you care.*

**Malibu:** *I am the least safe person around, seriously. I trip over thin air; I get tangled in cords and my jacket and hair. I occasionally choke while breathing. I am totally accident prone. Meeting is laaaaaame. Didn’t help that I was already bored to begin with.*

Hopefully, your agency’s safety committee does not have members like Malibu and Cake, but there could be some resemblance to your committee in regards to members being bored or not actively engaged.

## A Dysfunctional Committee – Signs That a Committee Isn’t Functioning Properly

- Employees lack knowledge of the committee’s function.
- Non-existent committee goals or vision.
- The same person is assigned to do all the talking at committee meetings.
- Failure to introduce safety topics or recommendations for action.
- Unresolved recurring issues or actions.

***“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”***

## What Causes A Committee To Be Dysfunctional?

- A lack of training and direction, and a lack of resources.
- A perception that the committee has no value.
- Committee activities are not effectively communicated to management and/or employees.
- Boring or long meetings, and meetings that lose focus on safety topics.
- A lack of clear agenda items, poor recording of meeting minutes, and a lack of follow-up.

**Henry Ford**

We all have sat through various committee meetings and recognized that some committee meetings are very engaging, organized, and productive, while others need an injection of some energy.

## Tips to Engage Your Safety Committee so it Becomes More “FUNctional”

- The formal or informal leadership and members of the committee should be respected, safe, reliable, committed, and motivated.
- During meetings, allow members time to provide feedback on positive observations of safety practices and behaviors.
- Invite non-members or guests to enhance the committee’s effectiveness by increasing their awareness and knowledge base.
- Celebrate successful proactive safety programs or initiatives. Make sure the successful initiatives are shared with the employees so they know their committee representatives are contributing to making positive progress.
- Conduct workplace safety audits that report on positive safety conditions and improvements in the workplace.
- Conduct workplace safety audits that go beyond “looking for hazards.” Conduct audit/inspections that address specific areas like PPE (personal protective equipment) or emergency evacuation procedures.
- Have a member bring a new employee to a committee meeting and welcome their feedback on their safety orientation and observations since being hired.
- Engage communication among safety committee members so they learn one another’s vision of safety.

A joint labor-management safety committee should not only just comply with the MN Administrative Rules, Chapter 5208, An Accident and Injury Reduction Program. An effective joint-labor management committee should also be FUNctional!

## Rules of the Road - Test Your Knowledge

by Marlys Williamson, Underwriting Manager

Unless you've taken the test for your MN driver's license in recent years, you may be surprised how much the rules of the road have changed. In fact, rules and techniques for driving have changed from A (anti-lock brakes) to Z (zipper merges). Test your knowledge by answering the following five questions; then, view the answers below:



1. What is the color of a yield sign?
2. How do you brake with anti-lock brakes?
3. Why are drivers staying in the closed lane until reaching the merge area in a construction zone? Are they rude or right?
4. Where should you position your hands on the steering wheel?
5. Why is there an extra set of lines on the road?

### Answers:

1. If you still think the color of a yield sign is yellow, you would be wrong. The color changed from yellow/black to red/white in 1971!
2. Before anti-lock brakes were introduced, pumping the brakes (rather than exerting continuous pressure) was necessary to avoid skidding. With anti-lock brakes, forget what you learned about pumping the brakes – we are back to exerting continuous pressure.
3. When a lane is closed in a construction zone, motorists are to use both lanes of traffic until reaching the defined merge area, and then alternate in "zipper" fashion into the open lane. This approach, as opposed to slowing quickly and moving to the lane that will continue through the construction area, is intended to decrease danger.
4. With the advent of airbags, it became apparent that unless you want to punch yourself in the nose when the airbag deploys, the position of your hands on the steering wheel needs to change from the old gold standard "10 and 2" to "9 and 3" or, better yet, "8 and 4." Also, your seat should be positioned so you are at least 10 inches from the steering wheel.
5. The extra set of lines on the road denotes a bike lane. There are three types – solid white line, broken white line, and green line. A solid line is not to be crossed by a motorist. A broken line indicates that a motorist can cross into the lane to turn. A green line implies that the lane is available for use by either bikes or cars (but not at the same time!)

Download a copy of the current Minnesota Driver's Manual, which provides a summary of state laws, rules, and techniques for driving safely and legally in Minnesota. Since state laws and rules change periodically, each year's manual contains new information. The current manual is available on the MN Department of Public Safety's website:

[https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/dvs/forms-documents/Documents/Minnesota\\_Drivers\\_Manual.pdf](https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/dvs/forms-documents/Documents/Minnesota_Drivers_Manual.pdf)

Brush up on the law. You will be surprised how much things have changed!

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Safety & Loss Control Conference a Success!

by Todd Christenson, Safety and Loss Control Manager

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Safety & Loss Control Conference held this past October was a great success, with a 37 percent increase in registered attendees over last year. The conference strives to provide exceptional networking opportunities and professional development in the areas of workers' compensation, safety, loss control, and risk management. Attendee feedback was extremely positive, with "Overall value of the conference" receiving an average of 4.4 on a scale of 1-5.

Chief of Staff to Governor Mark Dayton, Tina Smith, opened this year's conference with an update on MnSAFE, Governor Dayton's statewide injury reduction initiative. Launched at last year's conference, MnSAFE requires state agencies to reduce workplace injuries by 25 percent within three years. Ms. Smith reported that state agencies as a whole achieved the FY2012 reduction goal of 5 percent and the Governor expects continued efforts to further reduce workplace injuries.

This year's conference featured preconference professional development sessions, including a session on post-offer employment testing, as well as concurrent conference sessions featuring national and local experts in the fields of workers' compensation, workplace safety, and

risk management. Finally, the conference concluded with a free post-conference professional development session focused on creating safety coaches out of supervisors. If you weren't there, you missed a wealth of information you could use to help your organization achieve its MnSAFE injury reduction goals!



Planning for next year's conference, scheduled for October 1-2, 2013, is already underway! Start making your own plans to attend next year's conference by marking the dates on your calendar and watching for future information on the [conference website](#) or via the [Safety -Contacts email list](#). If you have suggestions for specific sessions or topics you would like to see at the conference, please contact Todd Christenson, State Safety and Loss Control Manager at [todd.christenson@state.mn.us](mailto:todd.christenson@state.mn.us) or by phone at 651-201-3005.

## Housekeeping for Air Handling Units

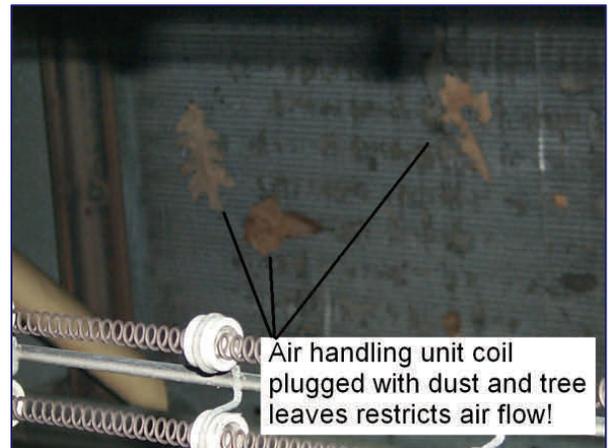
by Jim Kubisiak, State Industrial Hygienist

Risk Management Division's Safety and Loss Control Unit responds to numerous indoor air quality (IAQ) complaints every year. As part of an IAQ evaluation, the air handling system(s) are routinely inspected. Many times, issues are observed within the systems that likely contribute, at least in part, to the concerns raised by occupants. The following periodic inspection activities incorporated into a routine operations and maintenance program can prevent common problems that lead to IAQ complaints.

**Outdoor Air Intakes** – Make sure the bird screen is in place and not plugged with debris. Verify that the air dampers/actuators are functioning properly and the dampers do not completely close, allowing for the designed minimum amount of outdoor air ventilation. This area should be checked every three months.

**Filters** – Verify that the filters completely cover the air stream and do not allow air to bypass the filters. Make sure the filters meet at least the minimum recommended efficiency of MERV 8. If filters are changed based on pressure drop indicators, follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Otherwise, filters are commonly changed three times per year – in March or April, mid-summer, and in September or October. The filters should be inspected at least monthly.

**Cooling Coils and Drain Pans** – The cooling coils and drain pans should be inspected monthly during the cooling season for the build-up of dirt/debris or microbial growth. Cleaning of coils and drain pans is needed at least once per year, ideally occurring prior to the cooling season. The photo to the right is an example of debris on the coils (fall oak leaves) caused by filter bypass issues.



**Fan Housing** – Check the fan housing for rust, which may be an indication that excessive moisture is being drawn down the duct from the cooling coils or drain pans. Also, check for a build-up of dirt/debris, and clean as needed. The fan should be inspected at least monthly.

**Supply Ductwork** – Supply ductwork that is internally lined should be inspected at least annually for signs of accumulated dirt or possible fungal growth. Ideally, internal liners comprised of fiberglass found with fungal growth should be removed and replaced with an easily washable surface, such as closed cell insulation. The picture to the right is of internally lined supply ductwork fifteen feet downstream of the coils exhibiting fungal growth.



**Supply Diffusers** – Inspect supply diffusers monthly for signs of streaking or dust build-up. These should be cleaned via HEPA vacuuming when signs of dust streaking are present.

**Returns** – Inspect returns monthly for signs of accumulated dust and debris that may impede airflow, and clean when needed.

The development of a simple monthly, quarterly, and annual inspection and maintenance plan for your air handling system will help prevent air quality concerns for building occupants and reduce headaches for you!

Visit [RMD's website](#) for more information on IAQ and to retrieve a sample HVAC Operations and Maintenance Annual Checklist. If you have questions related to IAQ, contact Jim Kubisiak at 651-201-3016 or via email at [james.kubisiak@state.mn.us](mailto:james.kubisiak@state.mn.us).



## Slip, Trip, Falls have Fallen!

### Be a penguin on ice and snow



RMD, in partnership with the state-wide AFSCME Labor Management Safety Committee and the Inter-agency Safety and Health Committee, launched a statewide slip, trip, fall prevention safety poster campaign in October, 2011. The campaign began with the release of two winter themed posters, including the “walk like a penguin” poster. The campaign continued through the spring and summer with the release of four new posters focused on attentiveness

while walking, carrying loads, and use of stairs.

Reductions in slip, trip, falls has been impressive to date! Comparing the past winter, spring, and summer periods to the previous five year (FY2007-2012) averages, we have seen a 22.5 percent, 25.7 percent and 47 percent reduction respectively. “When we performed our first analysis, looking for a reduction in slip, trip, falls for the winter period, we weren’t surprised because of the relatively light winter with little snow and ice; however, we were pleasantly surprised to see the strong reductions continuing through the spring and summer seasons!” says Todd Christenson, State Safety and Loss Control Manager. In an effort to keep the slip, trip, fall prevention campaign fresh, two new winter themed posters focusing on proper footwear are being released for the 2012-2013 winter season. All state organizations are encouraged to place the posters throughout their work locations and to discuss their content with all employees. All slip, trip, fall posters can be found on the “Resources” page at [www.mn.gov/mnsafe](http://www.mn.gov/mnsafe).



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**Risk Management Division  
310 Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1602**

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## Fire Sprinkler Systems— The Basics

by Marlys Williamson, Underwriting Manager

A fire sprinkler system is one of the most effective forms of fire protection equipment because it saves lives and minimizes property damage. If the sprinkler system is compromised in any way, however, its effectiveness is weakened.

Loss control inspections performed at sprinklered state facilities frequently result in recommendations for corrective action. Below is a list of common infractions. Use this list as a self-inspection checklist to make certain that the sprinkler systems at your facilities are not impaired.

- √ Are sprinkler heads blocked? Combustibles should not be stored within 18 inches of sprinkler heads.
- √ Are sprinklers improperly installed? A sprinkler inspection, which should be conducted by a sprinkler contractor annually, is intended to uncover any installation problems.
- √ Are sprinkler heads coated or otherwise obstructed?
- √ Are items hanging from the sprinkler pipes or heads? *Several water damage losses to state facilities have occurred as a result of this one!*
- √ Are escutcheon plates missing?
- √ Are recalled sprinkler heads still in use?
- √ Are sprinkler heads missing altogether from the sprinkler system?

