The holidays are upon us, bringing joyous celebrations — as well as a host of stressors and hazards. We eat too much, we spend too much, we get distracted. As we turn our attention toward the season’s events, it can be tempting to put thoughts of health and safety aside — both at home and at work — but the holidays can be a particularly dangerous time. The festive distractions of the season can lead to reckless behavior, which can lead to accidents. “Decking the halls” unsafely can lead to dangerous slips and falls, electrocution, and potentially deadly fires. Caution, mindfulness, and preparation will help keep the season merry and bright.
The holidays are filled with social events, parties, and family get-togethers, putting more travelers on the road as well as opportunities for binge drinking and driving under the influence. Thanksgiving Eve is even referred to as “Black Wednesday” by highway patrol officers because of the increase in DUI fatalities. Stay safe by staying sober, or by designating a driver if you drink. Also, don’t let others drive if they have had too much to drink. Focus on the road — keep distractions to a minimum. Do not text while driving — not even using “talk-to-text”. Be patient and expect traffic delays; give yourself enough time to arrive safely. And always wear your seatbelt!

Whether decorating your home or your cubicle at work, don’t take shortcuts. Never stand on a chair to hang decorations — use a stepladder (see pg. 7 for stepladder safety). Do not hang decorations on fire sprinklers, as they can keep the sprinklers from operating properly. Keep extension cords out of walkways or other high-traffic areas, not even under a rug. Don’t allow cords to dangle anywhere they can be pulled down or tripped over. Never use staples or nails to attach cords to a surface, as this could puncture the insulation and cause a shock or a fire.

Making the season bright means filling our spaces with light, and because of this, December is the peak time of year for candle fires. Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn, and never leave burning candles unattended. Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look and feel like the real thing. Be sure fireplaces are clean and in good working order before using. Electric lights should meet safety standards. Inspect all lightbulbs and cords for damage before using. Throw away lights with frayed wires. Avoid overloading outlets, as doing so can cause them to overheat. Also, no more than three strings of lights should be run end to end.
Congratulations to Theo Stallworth and Mike Hawkes of the Division of Business & Professional Regulation for receiving this award!

Theo and Mike were nominated by agency safety coordinator Ruth Dillard. According to Tracy Pyke, Chief of the Bureau of Agency Services, these two men “went above and beyond their job duties” in order to ensure the safety of their fellow employees. When their agency was forced to relocate suddenly, Mike and Theo took it upon themselves to coordinate with division safety wardens to review and establish effective evacuation procedures at each of the three new buildings.

Congratulations also to Robert Heagey of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission!

According to agency safety coordinator Matt Jay, Bob is a “forward thinking, safety minded employee” who “takes immense pride in his attention to safety in all aspects of his job.” He initiated a hands-on trailer training program for his Fisheries coworkers which then spread to other sections who saw the need. This program, as well as the implementation of a towing capacity labeling system, has “remarkably increased the efficiency and safety for staff towing state vessels on our roadways.”

Do you know an employee, agent, or volunteer who has made exceptional contributions to the reduction and control of employment-related accidents? Contact your agency’s safety coordinator, who can submit a nomination. Forms and details can be found on the Division of Risk Management website: https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/Risk/LossPrevention/LossPreventionAwards.htm
In 2002, Caterpillar, Inc. had over 20,000 injuries reported, equaling over 63,000 lost work days. The company’s leaders knew they had to make some changes. The following year, they implemented their Safety Improvement Process (SIP) in hopes of improving the culture of safety in the workplace. This included top-down engagement, clearly defined responsibilities and priorities for employees at all levels, consistent methods and criteria, and recognition of positive behavior and performance.

Within 10 years of implementing its SIP, Caterpillar had achieved 85% fewer injuries, and saved the company $450 million in direct and indirect costs in the process.

This successful private sector safety program contains several components that can be implemented across state agencies:

**MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT.** Safety and loss prevention requires participation from all levels, including upper management. Organizational leaders need to be engaged and aware of potential issues in their agencies. Safety coordinators should present to managers the current data and statistics, as well as goals and objectives for the future. The Division of Risk Management provides state agencies and universities with numerous data reports throughout the year to help with this.

**EMPLOYEE KNOWLEDGE, PARTICIPATION, & CULTURE.** Employees should understand the basic safety rules for their workplace, be encouraged to report their observations regarding potential safety hazards, and be given the means to offer suggestions for ways to improve (e.g., a suggestion box or other reporting tool). Safety must be a priority for all workers.

**TRAINING AND EDUCATION.** Each agency should have training and education so that every employee is familiar with rules, regulations, and protocols regarding safety at work, either online or in person, or both. This is an important component of an effective safety program even for long-time employees. In addition to training and education received at the time of hire, employees should also receive refresher courses periodically, as well as whenever any procedural changes occur.

**SAFETY INSPECTIONS.** Each agency should provide for periodic safety inspections of facilities (including public access areas) and equipment. The inspection process should include a robust corrective action component, as well as clear communication among stakeholders about the actions being taken. The process (Continued on page 5)
should also include follow-up so that hazards discovered during the inspections do not recur.

HAZARD PREVENTION / COMPLIANCE. Once hazards have been detected and reported to the agency’s safety team, it is imperative that steps be taken to reduce or eliminate them, as well as follow up evaluations to ensure that the risks have been properly addressed.

INCIDENT INVESTIGATION. This component is critical to managing the culture of workplace safety as well as making continuous improvement. Work-related accidents and injuries should be reported to the employer as soon as possible (immediately following an accident). Once an injured person has been provided with first aid, the location needs to be secured and controlled to prevent further injury. Then documentation of the accident can begin – describe the scene, take photos if needed, gather a list of witnesses, and identify the events that happened immediately before and after the incident. Note any specific machinery or equipment involved. Witnesses’ accounts should be recorded as soon as possible, before memories fade. Once causes can be identified, corrective action must be recommended and implemented in order to prevent a repeat of the incident.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT / EVALUATION. An important part of an effective safety program is a process to ensure the program’s continuous improvement. This process should provide a means for planning and reviewing the program’s progress on an ongoing basis.

For more information on data reports, safety inspections, or how to improve the safety program at your agency, contact the Division of Risk Management’s Safety & Loss Prevention Team at statelosspreventionprogram@myfloridacfo.com.

USING LAGGING & LEADING INDICATORS TO MEASURE & IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

An agency’s commitment to safety can be measured by the efficacy of its safety program through the use of indicators. Both lagging and leading indicators are useful in helping to predict trends.

A LAGGING INDICATOR draws upon past accident and claim statistics, such as accident claims, workers’ compensation payments, or return-to-work timeframes. Lagging indicators can help evaluate the effectiveness of a program over time, after improvements have been made. These traditional metrics tell the “score at the end of the game,” as Andy Schneider, global safety manager at Caterpillar, Inc. stated. For example, claim data provided by the Division of Risk Management shows past trends and can be used by agencies to show potential weaknesses in an agency’s safety program.

Leading indicators are used to gauge risks, indicate the likelihood of future incidents, and measure the efficacy of preventative measures. A LEADING INDICATOR measures activities implemented to prevent and control incidents, such as employee safety training programs, safety audits, or hazards identified and corrected before an incident occurs. Leading indicators are focused on prevention. The most effective of these allows feedback, measures positive behavior rather than negative, is clear and credible, and tracks the actual impact of an action rather than its intended result.
Everything we do, at home, at work—everything—can be thought of as a process. For example, cooking Grandma’s apple pie recipe is a process: there are steps to be followed and an order in which to follow them. Keeping the workplace safe from hazards and accident-free involves a number of processes, from agency-wide programs to closing a file drawer if you notice it has been left open.

There is one thing that all processes have in common—they can be improved. (Well, maybe not Grandma’s apple pie.) It is always possible to find a way to make a process better, whether by redesigning it or making a new commitment to it.

Continuous improvement is the ongoing enhancement of processes and services through both incremental and breakthrough program changes. Among the most widely-used methods to institute continuous improvement is through the use of one of the many continuous improvement cycle models that have been developed over the last few decades. One of the most popular of these cyclical models is the Plan-Do-Check-Adjust (PDCA) model.

**Plan** – The planning stage of a continuous improvement cycle involves analyzing a process and determining if the process presents any opportunities for improvement. This stage includes establishing measurable goals and objectives for new processes and evaluating existing processes against their previously established goals and objectives.

**Do** – In this stage of the cycle, personnel implement the plans developed during the first stage of the cycle. During this stage, personnel should be sure to collect data for use in the remaining steps of the cycle as well as for future cycles.

**Check** – In this stage, personnel study the results of the process changes implemented earlier in the cycle. This involves comparing the actual results of the change against the expected (or hoped-for) results. Personnel should also review the implementation to see where (if anywhere) the actual implementation differed from the planned implementation. The data gathered during this step in the cycle should be saved for use in future PDCA cycles.

**Adjust** – In this final stage of the cycle, personnel should determine if the changes implemented in the first three steps of the cycle have effectuated improvement both within the unit that works the process and for the agency as a whole. This information should then be used to inform the next continuous improvement cycle.

One of the most positive results of using continuous improvement is that the thinking behind it eventually becomes ingrained as part of the agency’s culture. Everything you do is aimed at making what you do better.
is the gift that keeps on giving

Keep decorations and other flammable items at least 3 feet away from heat sources.

Never leave cooking equipment unattended, and turn off burners if you have to leave the room.

Turn off space heaters before leaving the room or going to sleep.

Be sure smoke alarms are in working order — test them monthly and change the batteries yearly.

40 percent of Americans slip and fall during holiday activities, such as decorating.

Safety Never Takes a Holiday

When enjoying the holidays, be safe - don’t drink and drive.
References


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