

BIG LOSERS? YOU BET – AND PROUD OF IT!

Brenda Tyczkowski, Health & Family Services

In 2006 the six office staff in the Health & Family Services, Northeastern Regional office, Division of Quality Assurance, decided we were a bit “too fluffy.” We looked at the barriers to weight loss and decided that the biggest problem was a lack of time to commit to a program. Maybe if we had a structured program that would come to us, instead of us going to the program, we might be able to stay with it.

We arranged for a “Weight Watchers at Work” meeting to be held in the Regional Office on a weekly basis over our lunch break. Flyers were put up around the building and we personally visited each agency in the building, encouraging others to join. Our group swelled to 16 members.

The journey began in April of 2006.

The group lost 115 pounds during our 15 week program! Our success can be attributed to the support system that developed among the members. Treats for co-workers became fruit, instead of doughnuts, we shared recipes and tips, and we got to know the folks from other floors. Where we once just smiled at each other in the elevator, we now know each other well enough to know who is tempted by

cookies and who deserves a “good job,” when we see them drinking water.

Our core group has committed to other lifestyle changes as well. We use our break time for exercise. Some walk outside, regardless of the weather, another group exercises to workout

tapes, and one ambitious soul walks up and down the stairwell for exercise. We pooled our money to start a bottled water service, so we have icy-cold water available all of the time.

At the conclusion of our “At Work” program, we joined forces with other people who work in the downtown area and opened the meetings up to the public. To accommodate the group, the meetings are now held at the church next door to our building. In the end, we have not only impacted our own wellness, but have affected community members as well.

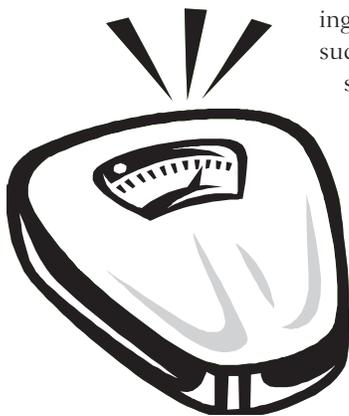
The group is proud of the changes we have made. The journey is long, but the road is so much smoother when traveled with friends.

“Our success can be attributed to the support system that developed among the members.”

WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Wellness programs such as Weight Watchers or other similar types of activities can be scheduled in state facilities if supported by management within the agency. Even if the employees participating in the wellness activity are going to pay the participation fee, and no state funding is involved, it is recommended that a simplified notification process be used to provide available and interested vendors the opportunity to participate. Vendors should be notified of the details of the proposed wellness program and asked to submit proposals to describe their programs. The agency may review the proposals to determine which program(s) best fit the goals of the agency wellness program.

The vendor programs can be scheduled in available meeting rooms as long as they do not interrupt the normal operations of the building occupants. Employee participation should occur during non-work time such as lunch hours.

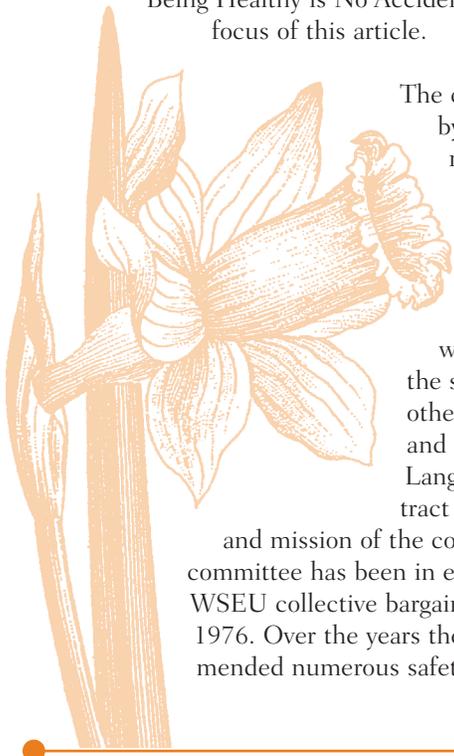


SPOTLIGHT ON...

Health and Safety Committees at Work

Gary Lonzo, Wisconsin State Employees Union

The State of Wisconsin is similar to other employers in Wisconsin; they too have developed joint health and safety committees with the many unions representing state employees. The Wisconsin State Employees Union, WSEU, works with management to develop the Safe & Sound-Being Healthy is No Accident newsletter and is the focus of this article.



The committee is co-chaired by a State of Wisconsin management representative and a WSEU member representative. The committee consists of ten (10) members, half of which are appointed by the state agencies and the other half are appointed by and represent WSEU.

Language in the WSEU contract establishes the structure and mission of the committee. The statewide committee has been in existence and part of the WSEU collective bargaining agreement since 1976. Over the years the committee has recommended numerous safety suggestions involving

chemical spills, building conditions, mold & asbestos, building safety concerns such as broken windows, doors, stairs, broken ceiling tiles and other conditions along with the purchase and usage of appropriate safety equipment and techniques. The safety committee does not deal with personnel or staffing issues.

The committee's activities revolve around the Abnormally Hazardous Task Reports that are submitted by employees and local safety officers. The committee and its members review the reports and if the unsafe situation is not resolved, the committee or one of its members may investigate the situation further. Ultimately the committee will make a recommendation to the agency involved to correct the unsafe working condition(s). The committee meets on a quarterly basis at various facilities throughout Wisconsin and continues to monitor the health and safety of both the workplace and employees.

Committee activities include:

- Review and process Abnormally Hazardous Task Reports filed with the committee.
- Review of injury and illness records.
- Gather information on chemicals used in the workplace or on available safety equipment.
- Conduct inspections of facilities and request employee input.
- Identify relevant safety laws, policies & regulations and how they apply.
- Promote health and safety awareness and training opportunities.

Through the years committee members have come and gone, but what each member has brought is their valuable experience and a commitment to work in harmony with all of the members of the committee to make our work environment safer.

MOVE OVER LAW

Georgia Thompson, State Risk Management

What do you do when you see a stopped emergency, maintenance or law enforcement vehicle along the side of the road? What action do you take?

If you move over one lane from where the stopped vehicle is located or, when you are unable to change lanes slow down while maintaining a safe speed until you've completely passed the stopped vehicle(s), you're in compliance with the State of Wisconsin's Move Over Law.

The Wisconsin Move Over Law, passed in 2001, is designed to protect law enforcement officers, emergency responders, tow operators and highway maintenance personnel who are performing necessary work on Wisconsin roadways.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary Frank J. Busalacchi says, "When motorists obey the Move Over Law and create a safety zone, they reduce the dangers to themselves and those who work along our highways."

Nationally, each year alongside our roadways, hundreds of hard-working men and women are injured or killed by passing motorists. The Wisconsin Move Over Law will help keep our workers and motorists safe and the law is being enforced. In Columbia County alone, the Sheriff's Department stopped more than 1,700 motorists on Interstates 39/90/94 this past summer resulting in more than 1,800 citations, including 27 move-over law violations.

In the future, what will you do when you see a stopped emergency, maintenance or law enforcement vehicle along the side of the road? Move over or risk a ticket!

SAFE TOYS ARE NO ACCIDENT

Michelle Reinen, Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection

When toys are poorly manufactured, designed or misused, harmless playthings can spell disaster.

Over the years parents and caregivers have worried about the toys they were giving children. Does the toy have small parts that could become a choking hazard? Is the toy age graded appropriately? Is the toy too loud? Does the toy have electrical components? As a result, parents have always been urged to take an active role in playtime activities; however the recent increase in toy recalls due to a risk of lead exposure has placed a new emphasis on selecting safe toys for children.

Parents should be aware that lead is most harmful to children ages six and younger, causing nervous system damage, attention disorders, and other serious health effects. Lead poisoning is almost impossible to detect without a blood test unless it is very severe. In addition, doctors typically screen for lead based on high-risk factors that do not include the risks from toys or nursery items. Children's products containing lead or lead paint may be an overlooked dangerous source of poisoning.

Since September 2007 there have been over 80 recalls due to the risk of lead exposure; a majority of these recalls were children's toys. As a result many parents, grandparents and caregivers are anxious about purchasing safe, lead-free toys. Parents want a way to check toys for lead and have turned to home lead test kits. Are they reliable? On October 22, 2007 the US Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a press release (#08-038) announcing the results from a special evaluation of the consumer lead test kits. The results showed that "many of the tests performed using the kits did not detect lead when it was there (false negatives); some indicated lead was present when it was not (false positives)." In addition the release stated that "none of the kits consistently detected lead in products if the lead was covered with a non-lead coating. Based on the study consumers should not use lead test kits to evaluate consumer products for potential lead hazards."

So what can parents do? As always try to follow these basic guidelines when selecting toys so playtime can be fun, educational and safe.

- Check your home and your childcare facility for recalled products, including those with lead. You can check products at www.cpsc.gov or register for the Keep Your Kids Safe monthly electronic newsletter at www.datcp.state.wi.us and use the search bar.

- Choose the right toy for the right child. Consider the child's age, interest and abilities when toy shopping. Does your child still put everything in their mouth?
- Always read labels carefully. Follow all warning labels and age recommendations.
- Avoid small toys or toys with small parts or breakable parts for children under the age of 3; these are choking hazards. Use a toilet paper tube to test; if it falls through, it's too small.
- Watch out for toys that are too loud. Children often hold toys close to their ears, so test the toys in the store. If they are too loud for you, they are too loud for your child.
- Unpainted wooden cloth toys are less likely than plastic and vinyl toys to be tainted with lead. Also avoid metal jewelry for children.
- Avoid toys that must be plugged in to electrical outlets for children under age 8 to prevent electric shock or burns.
- Do not buy toys with magnets that may fall out or are small enough to be swallowed.
- Small magnets in toys have caused one death and many serious injuries requiring surgery.

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IT'S THE LEAD IN PAINT THAT MATTERS MOST

Reghan Walsh, Health & Family Services

Recently there has been a lot of media attention on children's toys and products that contain dangerous amounts of lead. While lead in toys and consumer products is a serious problem, in Wisconsin the primary source of lead exposure for children is dust from lead-based paint in the home and lead-contaminated soil. Since 1996, more than 40,000 young children have been found to be lead poisoned in Wisconsin. To date there has not been one child that has been found to be lead poisoned from playing with lead-tainted toys.

However it still remains that a child can be exposed to lead from toys and products and other sources, such as drinking water, traditional home remedies, cosmetics, and even through a parent's job or hobby. The main concern is that if a child is already poisoned, most likely from chipping and peeling lead-based paint, these sources can add to the child's exposure, compounding the effects of lead in the child's body.

Children under the age of 6 are the most vulnerable because lead interferes with the normal development of a young child's brain. Lead poisoning can result in lowered IQ, attention disorders, and developmental delays. A lead-poisoned child is more

likely to experience problems in school due to learning difficulties, poor reading skills and shortened attention span.

The consequences of childhood lead poisoning are very serious for the child, family and society. Adolescents who were lead poisoned as young children experience higher rates of high school dropout, teen pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency. Scientific studies show that the most violent crimes committed by adults are strongly associated with children's earlier lead poisoning.

Lead in the body can negatively impact health throughout the child's life as well. Childhood lead poisoning increases the risk of death from stroke and heart attack as adults. Studies have also shown that childhood lead exposure is linked to adult kidney disease, diabetes and cognitive deficits such as memory loss and Alzheimer's disease.

A child with lead poisoning most often show no signs of being poisoned. The only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is to have a blood lead test. It's important to test young children at risk for lead poisoning because intervention can limit damage to a child's mind and ability to learn.

While it is important to remove lead tainted toys and other products from children, the most important thing to do is to check homes for lead-based paint. For more information about lead in products and lead poisoning prevention contact your health department, the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, 608/266-5817, or visit the Lead-Safe Wisconsin website, dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead.

Bee and Insect Stings, continued from page 5

What to Do if a Person is Stung

1. Have someone stay with the victim to be sure that they do not have an allergic reaction.
2. Wash the site with soap and water.
3. The stinger can be removed using a 4x4-inch gauze wiped over the area or by scraping a fingernail over the area. Never squeeze the stinger or use tweezers. It will cause more venom to go into the skin and injure the muscle.
4. Apply ice to reduce the swelling.
5. Do not scratch the sting. This will cause the site to swell and itch more, and increase the chance of infection.



There are several signs of an allergic reaction to bee stings. Look for swelling that moves to other parts of the body, especially the face or neck. Check for difficulty in breathing, wheezing, dizziness or a drop in blood pressure. Get the person immediate medical care if any of these signs are present. It is normal for the area that has been stung to hurt, have a hard swollen lump, get red and itch. There are kits available to reduce the pain of an insect sting. They are a valuable addition to a first aid kit.

For information on safely removing known nests, contact the Extension Office in your area.

Allergic Reactions to Bee Stings

Allergic reactions to bee stings can be deadly. People with known allergies to insects stings should always carry an insect sting allergy kit and wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace stating their allergy. See a physician about getting either of these.

Excerpted with permission from: Cyr, D. L. and Johnson, S. B. 2006. First Aid for Bee and Insect Stings. Bulletin #2345, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Orono, ME, 2p. Available at: <http://extensionpubs.umext.maine.edu/POS/form=item.html&item=2345&store=413>

WINTER PROVIDES PAINFUL REMINDER

Rollie Boeding, State Risk Management

The winter of 2007-08 will be remembered as the winter of record snowfalls and unusually cold temperatures, but unfortunately for some it will be remembered as a winter of pain and suffering. The winter conditions that prevailed almost continuously since early December have resulted in a major increase in slip and fall injuries to state employees.

In January and February the Bureau of State Risk Management received 178 injury reports for slip and fall claims as a result of winter conditions, compared to 80 injury reports for the same time period in 2007. These reports only included those slips and falls that occurred in the workplace and did not take into account injuries that may have occurred while not at work.

The conditions created during this past winter certainly increased the exposure of experiencing a slip and fall on the ice. Wisconsin winters can be nasty but we already know that. Regardless of whether you were at work, at home, at your child's school or the supermarket parking lot, icy conditions this year definitely exceeded the norm.

That is why managing our risks is something we must focus on every day, whether at work or at play. Conditions change and those changes alter our exposures to injury or illness. How we anticipate and proactively respond to those changing exposures

is what risk management is really all about. The risk management process provides that we identify exposures to loss, measure the severity of the exposure, determine steps to either prevent or reduce the potential for loss if we can't avoid it completely, implement the steps and then monitor the results.

For all but one week in January we were exposed to fairly severe ice conditions creating a significant exposure for injury. Good risk management practices would dictate that we became more vigilant about our surroundings and surfaces and the potential for slipping on the ice, that we wore footwear that reduced the potential for slipping on the ice and in some cases that we took alternative routes to avoid severe exposures. Even if we did all of that we still had the exposure of slipping on the ice and in some cases we would still have fallen. But if we had prepared as best we could, our chances of slipping on the ice would be reduced, the number of injuries could have potentially been reduced and a lot of pain and suffering could have been avoided.

Slipping on the ice in winter or getting sun burned or dehydrated in summer all present us with conditions of personal risk. Are we being proactive in how we manage those risks? When we leave to go play golf or spend the day on the beach are we aware of the potential for bad weather? If so what steps are we going to take to reduce our exposure to injury in the event of severe weather? How we manage our own personal risks is dependent upon our ability to remain vigilant on a daily basis and to adjust to changing conditions as warranted. Please remain vigilant and have a safe and enjoyable Wisconsin summer!

FIRST AID FOR BEE AND INSECT STINGS

Dawna L. Cyr, Farm Safety Program Assistant, and Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D., Extension crops specialist, University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Most bees and insects will not attack if left alone. If provoked, a bee will sting in defense of its nest or itself. Thousands of people are stung each year and as many as 40 to 50 people in the United States die each year as a result of allergic reactions.

Reduce the Risk of Being Stung

1. Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing.
2. Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants. Don't wear cologne or perfume. Avoid bananas and banana-scented toiletries.
3. Wear clean clothing and bathe daily. Sweat angers bees.
4. Cover the body as much as possible with clothing.
5. Avoid flowering plants.
6. Check for new nests during the warmer hours of the day during July, August and September. Bees are very active then.
7. Keep areas clean. Social wasps thrive in places where humans discard food, so clean up picnic tables, grills and other outdoor eating areas.
8. If a single stinging insect is flying around, remain still or lie face down on the ground. The face is the most likely place for a bee or wasp to sting. Swinging or swatting at an insect may cause it to sting.
9. If you are attacked by several stinging insects at the same time, run to get away from them. Bees release a chemical when they sting. This alerts other bees to the intruder. More bees often follow. If possible, get indoors when there are few, if any, bees around you. Outdoors, a shaded area is better than an open area to get away from the insects.
10. If a bee comes inside your vehicle, stop the car slowly, and open all the windows.

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RISK MANAGEMENT HAPPENINGS

Conference – The 15th Annual Risk Management Conference was held November 7-8, 2008 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison with 344 participants. The attendees were inspired by luncheon speaker Fred Kusch who instructed the audience on the “Art of Being Positively Selfish”. His humorous presentation evolved around the premise that you must first take care of yourself physically and mentally before you can really begin to reach your full potential and give yourself to helping others.

The keynote address delivered by UW Madison professor Dr. Dan Anderson was quite somber in comparison, as Dr. Anderson outlined environmental and social risks facing corporations and government today. He outlined the need to effectively manage these risks or the very existence of the organization would be threatened.

The attendees were also provided the opportunity to attend 20 different breakout sessions ranging from issues as diverse as “Managing Risk and Opportunities of an Aging Workforce” to “Lessons from a 100 Year Flood Event” to a self-help session on “Mindful Meditation”. The 2008 conference will be held November 12-13 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison.

Safety Grants – The Bureau of State Risk Management awarded 10 safety grants totaling \$99,000 to various agencies and campuses for developing innovative injury reduction programs in FY08. The safety grant program encourages agencies and institutions to develop new approaches to managing the risks of workplace injuries. The grant funds are to be used for developing the program, with the agency funding the cost of the resources required for implementing the program. Capital equipment is not an eligible cost if the equipment purchased is part of the implementation of the program.



The safety grant application process for FY09 will be open in July with applications due by the end of the summer. Managers, supervisors and employees are encouraged to review their risk exposures for employee injuries and develop innovative programs for the upcoming grant application process.

Risk Management Overview Training – The Bureau of State Risk Management developed a Risk Management Overview training program for the Executive Management Development Academy sponsored by the Office of State Employee Relations and the LaFollette Institute at UW Madison. The Academy is part of the workforce planning initiative and is designed to provide future leaders of state government with the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful.

The risk management training program is a web cast that provides an overview of the state’s risk management program. The program is divided into four modules of approximately fifteen minutes each. It is an excellent resource for current managers, supervisors and employees. The training program can be accessed by going to the Department of Administration website. The training program is found under Enterprise Operations in the Bureau of State Risk Management section.



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