

## Manager/Supervisor Risk Management

#170–8/27/13

A twice weekly e-mail training for YCPARMIA members

### TOPIC: SAFETY –MATCHING PREVENTION TO INJURIES

There are two obvious ways to approach safety: you can get ahead by training and managing to prevent injuries, or you can target injuries that occur to prevent similar injuries from happening – or you can do both, or neither.

Managing to prevent injuries is, in the long term, obviously the most cost effective approach, but requires a great deal of anticipation, commitment and discipline. It comes up against the reality of inadequate staffing and resources that force priorities to meet immediate demands, rather than addressing speculative future injury prevention. With that said, it is probably the more common safety approach among our members through their unit meetings that include a safety topic.

One of short comings of this approach is the unrefined method of targeting exposures. Upon what should you concentrate your training and safety efforts, and who makes those decisions? Should the effort be to prevent catastrophic injuries, the most numerous injuries, or all injuries? The answer leads us to a YCPARMIA wide weakness that has been previously addressed. Absent a safety manager with entity-wide authority and responsibility, the traditional source of data analysis and prevention recommendations is the Safety Committee. With few exceptions, our members' safety committees are not up to speed in this area, so we have an uneven and decentralized response.

As a result the training and prevention decisions fall back on the manager/supervisor. They are in a great position to anticipate and evaluate the injury exposures that their workers face, but face the same limited resources and time to adequately address those issues. Illustrating this point are the accident reports that supervisors prepare following an injury. The majority determine that the employee's actions are the sole cause of the injury, and then the reports are usually very passive when recommending how to prevent similar accidents in the future. One of the disconnects seems to be that the question is not how to prevent injuries to the already injured employee, but how to prevent similar accidents/injuries to all employees.

This means that every accident/injury that an entity suffers should be seen as an opportunity to prevent similar accidents/injuries to any and all employees in the future. Signing the workers' compensation form and the accident investigation should be the start of the supervisor's response to injury – not the end. Moreover, the accident/injury should also trigger actions by other connected supervisors and managers – an entity wide response (back to the Safety Committee issue again). The average cost of a workers' compensation injury justifies management action on every accident.

The next topic will look at some possible supervisor responses to common accidents/injuries.

Next Topic: Safety – Matching Prevention to Injuries - continued