

Risk Alert: The Seasonal Employee

Preparing for summer often-times means bringing on temporary part-time staff to assist within the Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments. Regularly these positions are filled by high school and college students who are required to perform a variety of tasks without the background or experience of working outdoors, with power tools, or motorized equipment essential to the job duties. This inexperience creates safety and liability concerns that shouldn't be taken lightly just because staff will be hired for a short term.

Both worker's compensation and liability exposures exist for part-time seasonal staff. It is important to keep in mind that monetary payouts do not necessarily end when worker's tenure ends. With a catastrophic injury, medical expenses could reach the thousands and the liability could remain with the municipality years after the employee is off the payroll.

To assist in risk mitigation with your seasonal hires, IRMA recommends you complete the following:

- **Assess.** Prior to hiring conduct a hazard assessment, including identifying all job tasks. Review your job safety analyses (JSA) to provide guidance on what is required to perform those jobs safely. Carefully examine potential work areas and correct any on-site safety hazards. Determine any task limitations due to state regulations regarding minors and various mechanical equipment, hazardous materials and working conditions. Develop a training schedule to address all safety aspects outlined in the JSA analysis and that are within state regulations. See IRMA's [Seasonal Employee Orientation Checklist and Child Labor Law Review](#) located on the IRMA website under Publications/IRMA Bulletins or contact us for sample safety manuals.
- **Pre-Screen.** This includes thorough background checks for persons hired to work with children, driving records for anyone expected to operate a vehicle, validation of certifications (operator licenses, CPR, etc), and pre-employment physicals.
- **Train.** Training is essential to the success of your seasonal work program. All employees, seasonal and full, should be trained on what to do in-case of emergencies, review safety manuals and instructions on all equipment, and be aware of what equipment and tasks he/she is authorized to use or perform. This training should be verified with a signature that they have received and reviewed the information.



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Potential training topics include:

- Hazard Communications (Right-to-Know; Mandatory)
- Accident Reporting (Mandatory)
- Emergency Plans (Mandatory)
- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Requirements
- Driving Safety, including a hands-on road test
- Equipment Operation (example: mower safety)
- Summer Safety (example: sunburn, heatstroke, insect bites)

Please visit the [Training tab](#) on the IRMA website for a full list of training options to assist in training your seasonal employees.

- **Supervise.** A full-time adult employee should be present and supervising part-time seasonal workers at all times. The supervising party should be aware of any limitations of work on the seasonal employee, such as machine operation or driving restrictions.

For more information about creating a training program for your seasonal staff, please review IRMA's [Seasonal Employee Orientation & Safety Manual](#) located on the IRMA website under Best Practices Model Guidelines/Parks & Recreation and Public Works.