

MainstreetMinute

A workers' compensation resource for small business owners served by SFM—The Work Comp Experts

Ideas in action

Small firm's four-point formula for safety keeps it injury-free

Editor's note: SFM serves more than 13,000 employers across the Midwest. Our Premier Partner Award is given to a select few each year, recognizing them for putting good ideas into action.

ROGERS, Minn.—Successful small-business people pride themselves at solving problems. One in Rogers, Minn., has come up with solutions that have kept his manufacturing business injury-free for years.

"It's expensive to solve a problem more than once. Having the proper policies and procedures in place—including safety and training—translates to the bottom line," says Peter Will, second-generation owner of the family business Universal Promotions Inc., a 22-employee firm that does contract plastic printing for national and local markets.

It produces, for instance, pill boxes and medicine droppers for pharmacies. That involves manufacturing hazards.

Will's formula for addressing them:

Work area inspections. "We make sure the area around each workstation is free of clutter, well-lighted and properly equipped. We'll replace wobbly chairs, for instance. Each operator is required to clean the workstation at the end of each shift," says Will.

Training. "Before somebody operates a piece of equipment, we make sure they have a clear understanding of what they are doing. They read our written policies and procedures. They are trained by others who are experienced."

"In fact, we cross-train employees in different areas. It keeps employees fresh and attentive when they do different things throughout the day."

Regular employee meetings. One agenda item is safety, spiced up a little: A quiz, for instance, challenges employees to recall where the fire extinguishers are located, or the eyewash. Correct answers earn small prizes.

Safety point person. Currently, that's the Human Resources director, Gail Duncan, who

oversees the three-person safety committee and keeps it active.

"If somebody slipped and fell, would you know what to do? If you went to the eyewash station, would you actually know how to use it?" says Duncan. And so the company looks beyond required OSHA training. It trains for practical use, and it trains repeatedly. Resources include SFM's *5-Minute Solutions* and videos.

Says President Will: "Everybody likes to think they have common sense when it comes to doing their jobs safely. It's not always easy to capture that. But if you can capture and document it, and pass it along to others, then it becomes easier for the next person, and it's better for the organization."



A slip-and-fall injury costs \$20,000 on average, national studies say

But you can avoid them. Take advantage of SFM's resources—

"Stay on your feet" posters, paycheck stuffers and more. Prevent injuries due to cords, clutter, liquid and stairs.

"Walk like a penguin" posters, paycheck stuffers and more. Winter will be here before you know it. Start planning now to prevent injuries due to ice and snow.



Free to SFM policyholders. Order or download.

www.sfmic.com > Employers > Injury Prevention > Safety Resources

Scholarships awarded to 10 students

Ten students of parents fatally or seriously injured on the job have been awarded higher education scholarships of up to \$5,000 each by SFM Foundation for the 2010-11 school year. Each student's scholarship is renewed annually for up to five years.

This year's 10 scholarships are in addition to nine awarded in 2009, the foundation's first year.

The scholarship opportunity is available to students of parents fatally or seriously injured while working for Minnesota or Wisconsin employers, regardless of the employer's workers' compensation insurer. For more, see www.sfmic.com/foundation, or SFM Foundation on Facebook.

Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska ban texting

Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska enacted laws this year banning text messaging while driving. The new laws place them among 26 states with bans on texting while driving.

Current Minnesota law bans texting for all drivers and bans all cell phone use for drivers under age 18 who are operating with a learner or provisional license, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association.

As an employer, you may want to educate employee drivers about the texting laws in your state and consider updating employee policies to prohibit all cell phone use while driving.



the bottom line

30 percent of business failures can be linked to bad hiring practices.

—U.S. Department of Commerce

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