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**Risk Management: Hiring Assessments**

*By Britani Laughery, Internal Operations Manager*

**W**ould you like to increase the quality of each hire, decrease the cost per hire, decrease the time spent hiring and decrease the time to fill an open position? Does it sound too good to be true?

It is common knowledge that poor hiring decisions costs employers time, money and resources on a number of business fronts.

It is common knowledge that poor hiring decisions costs employers time, money and resources on a number of business fronts. Using a tool, such as a hiring assessment is a cost effective and efficient means of identifying conscientious, top performing candidates. The assessments test for skills that are difficult to measure during the interview or from a resume. Assessments also allow a true “apples to apples” comparison of the applicants and afford the opportunity to ask a great deal of job related questions in a relatively short amount of time. Assessments are based on scientific re-

search and are predictive of future job performance. Using assessments as part of the hiring practice is a benefit to applicants as well as it provides candidates a better idea of what it takes to be successful in the position.

As a best practice in hiring and risk management, the MMIA has recently implemented the use of hiring assessments as a supplement to our hiring process through the use of ApplicantPro. Our members will benefit in two ways from this practice:

- MMIA hiring process is enhanced and will help to ensure quality employees to serve the MMIA members’ needs; and,
- MMIA members that choose to implement hiring assessments with ApplicantPro will receive a discount on their subscription cost.

If you would like more information on the benefits of hiring assessments, and how you can get started, please call Angela Simonson, Human Resource/Employment Practices Specialist with MMIA at 1-800-635-3089. ■

# NEW BEGINNINGS

By Alan W. Hulse, MMIA CEO

As you may already know, the MMIA is a risk retention pool that provides four coverage programs as well as risk management services to incorporated cities and towns in Montana. The programs offered by the MMIA are Liability, Property, Workers Compensation and Employee Benefits. We are owned by the members who participate in these programs, and it is our mission to provide outstanding risk management services to our member owners. We continually strive to define what your needs are, and produce timely, effective and convenient services to meet those needs. While the MMIA prides itself in being able to effectively meet the needs of the cities and towns in Montana, we realize that we have limitations. Our expertise and resources are focused on providing coverages in the four areas described above, and providing quality training and risk management services related to those coverages. Fortunately, there are other entities that provide services, training and technical assistance to municipalities in Montana that complement the services provided by the MMIA, but go beyond our capabilities.

The Montana League of Cities and Towns (MLCT), is an Association for cities and towns in the State of Montana. The MLCT has traditionally focused primarily on advocacy for municipalities in Montana, while also promoting improved performance among municipal governments by assisting cities and towns in cooperative efforts for their mutual benefit. In 1986, the MLCT was instrumental in creating the MMIA as part of this mission.

The Local Government Center at Montana

State University (LGC), has a stated mission to “strengthen the capacities of local governmental units and provide training, technical assistance, and research services to elected, appointed, and administrative officials. We work to support Montana’s cities, towns, and counties by partnering with local government practitioners and their professional associations.”

The MMIA, MLCT, and LGC have a shared client base/membership which is Montana municipalities. All three entities have a common thread to our missions which is to provide services and technical support to Montana municipalities. As such, the three entities have started discussions about how we can better collaborate to enhance and add value to the services you, our members/clients, receive. Each entity individually has a mission to provide outstanding service to the cities and towns in Montana, and I believe that each entity has been achiev-



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ing that mission. However, it is only logical that strategic collaboration between the three entities will greatly enhance the collective services that our members receive.

While we are still in the early stages of these discussions, a few things have already been accomplished through this collaborative model that will directly benefit the cities and towns of Montana. The MMIA, MLCT, MACo, LGC, and MSU worked diligently together during the 2015 Legislative session to achieve base funding for the LGC in Montana State University’s

CEO'S CORNER



budget. This accomplishment will hopefully ensure that the LGC will not have to fight for its existence every two years, and more importantly has helped them build the capacity to hire an Associate Director which will tremendously enhance their service capabilities. Additionally, in July of this year, the MLCT purchased an undivided interest in the MMIA building, which will allow the MLCT to build equity in property over time at zero percent interest with no additional budgetary outlay. As a result of this move, the

MMIA is providing internet, IT and telephone services to the MLCT on a contract basis for significantly less cost than the MLCT was incurring for these services on

its own. This arrangement costs the MMIA nothing and saves the MLCT money while providing them with backup and support they have never had. All of this benefits you, our combined members.

While we are still exploring the possibilities of this new strategic partnership, I am confident that over time, the cities and towns of Montana will enjoy a significantly higher level of service through the collaborative efforts of the MMIA, MLCT, and LGC. It is a new beginning, but stay tuned! ■



# Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls on Ice

By *Thomas B. Danenhower, Risk Management Specialist*

In looking over workers' compensation claims that came in during January 2015, we had a surprising high number of claims at 81; what was not as surprising was that most of these were due to slips and falls on ice. Although not all slips and falls on ice are preventable, the number and severity of fall injuries can be reduced by comprehensively using slip resistant footwear and/or using fall prevention cleats commonly available at sporting goods or department stores. Cleats are inexpensive, especially when compared to injuries resulting from slips and falls. If the fall results in a serious low back, traumatic brain injury or a serious shoulder or knee injury, claim costs can be in the tens of thousands of dollars and even worse, claimants can be permanently disabled or impaired.

It is important to identify and remediate hazards. Take time to identify places in the work environment where winter/weather-related slips and falls are most likely to occur and work to control the hazards. Conduct periodic inspections/maintenance of areas that are subject to repeated hazards, such as entranceways. Develop and implement snow and ice removal programs:

- Remove ice and snow completely before employees arrive for work and continue removal throughout the day if needed.
- Apply de-icers and/or abrasives to accelerate melting of ice and give traction.
- Walkways, stairways, and ramps should be completely cleared of ice and snow. Give extra attention to areas frequented by the public. Stairs should have standard handrails and there should be good lighting on all sloped surfaces.
- Pay particular attention to north-facing sides of buildings which receive less sunlight and tend to stay frozen longer.
- Address problems with roof drainage from buildings if they cause ice problems around walkways, stairs or ramps.
- Give extra attention to entranceways because moisture can be tracked into facilities where tile and other surfaces can get slippery. Provide extra walk-off mats during heavy snows, with replacement mats or a water vac available if mats get saturated.



Use wet floor signs to warn employees and visitors about the increased slip hazard.

- Encourage employees to report any areas that need ice/snow removal, de-icing, sanding, mopping, etc. Remind them that they are each responsible for safety—don't rely on someone else to report the hazard.

Fall prevention training for new employees on how to prevent winter/weather-related slips/ falls and refresher trainings for existing employees is available from the MMIA/MACo video/DVD library or through MMIA's online Safety National training materials program.

We have observed it is a good idea to train

employees on how to safely enter and exit vehicles and equipment. Far too many injuries occur in the simple process of getting in and out vehicles, trucks, and other equipment. The MMIA believes that most of these injuries are preventable with a little extra care. Follow the basics to avoid slips and falls when entering/exiting vehicles and equipment.

- Install anti-slip coatings or tape on the steps of vehicles and equipment.
- Keep vehicle/equipment steps clean and dry.
- Inspect the area around the vehicle/equipment before stepping out. Even stepping onto wet leaves can increase the risk for slips/falls.

- Always face the vehicle/equipment when entering/exiting, keeping legs close to the vehicle and getting as close as possible before climbing in.
- Don't enter/exit a vehicle/equipment without first having a good hand-hold. Pulling oneself up reduces the force between the shoe and the step and reduces the danger of a slip.
- Practice the "3-points of contact" system to significantly reduce the chances of slipping/falling. The 3-points of contact system means that 3 of 4 limbs are in contact with the vehicle/equipment at all times when entering and exiting – either one hand and two feet, or two hands and one foot. Only one limb is in motion at any one time.
- Step down lightly, testing the surface before putting entire weight down. Transfer weight slowly and use the vehicle for support. Never jump onto a step or surface. When stepping off the bed of a truck or other equipment, step down backward – never "jump" or "fall" down forward.
- Wipe one's feet and keep mud, ice, and other debris off the bottom of shoes/boots to maintain good traction.

For more information or to set up a fall prevention training for your municipality or department, please contact Thom Danenhower, [tdanenhower@mmia.net](mailto:tdanenhower@mmia.net) or (800) 635-3089, extension 131 or ask for Thom. ■



## Annual MLCT Conference 5k Fun Run, Walk and Bike

Join us for the annual MLCT conference 5k fun run, walk and bike in Bozeman. The race will be held Wednesday, October 7th at 12:30 at the GranTree Inn. This year you will have the opportunity to bike the 5k! Bring your own or borrow one. A limited number of bikes will be provided for those who wish to bike the race. All ages and ability levels are invited to be a part of an emerging MLCT tradition.

The \$15 registration fee includes race entry, lunch after the race and a donation to The Community Café. The Community Café is a program of local non-profit HRDC, striving to improve food security and provide healthy food on a pay what you can model. Registration information can be found at [www.mtleague.org](http://www.mtleague.org).

## Bob Worthington Risk Management Achievement Award:

### John Wilson Public Works Director, Missoula

By *Laura Wigen, Property Program Specialist*

Established in 2008, the Bob Worthington Risk Management Achievement Award (BWRMAA) recognizes exceptional member activities directed at managing municipal risk and preventing losses. The Claims and Risk Management staff of MMIA nominated people, groups, departments or members who have demonstrated proactive behaviors which positively affect their community. This directly affects the MMIA pool membership as well and should be seen as an example of "going that extra mile." A finalist is recognized in each quarterly newsletter and a vote is taken among the MMIA staff to choose a winner. Each of the finalists showed an effort to demonstrate responsibility and proactive behavior for risk management. MMIA offers sincere congratulations to each of the finalists and challenges each member out there to be inspired toward future award nomination!

The MMIA staff would like to congratulate John Wilson, Public Works

Director of Missoula, formally Public Works Director of Whitefish, for winning the 2015 Bob Worthington Risk Management Award.

John Wilson did an outstanding job of keeping the Whitefish Water Department's liability claim costs to a minimum. From 2010-2014 the department had less than \$10,000 in claim experience and only 9 claims! John has been similarly helpful on other recent claims in promptly producing job contracts and taking the lead in getting the involved employees to respond to investigative questions. We deeply appreciate such excellent help and cooperation with the claims adjusting process—job well done!

Not only do we congratulate John Wilson on being innovative and supportive but we want to challenge the rest of our members to follow suit. This is truly a great example of risk management. The other finalists were the Ben Sautter, Street Superintendent for City of Helena, for being very pro-active, and Brian Hensel, City of Missoula for being a cost savings innovator with an emphasis on safety and risk management. ■

# The MMCT/FOA Brief

Stacy Ulmen, CMC MMCT/FOA President, City Clerk, Bozeman MT

Hello Montana!

On behalf of the MMCT/FOA I would like to extend our appreciation to the MMIA for offering an area for a quarterly blurb of sorts about our Association and the exciting happenings surrounding the position of the Municipal Clerk, Treasurer or Finance Officer.

The MMCT/FOA Executive Board and the Education Committee met with with the Montana State University Local Government Center on Friday, August 28th in Helena to discuss the outcomes of this year's Institute as well as planning the Fall meeting at the upcoming League of Cities and Towns Conference and the Spring 2016 Institute.

See you all in beautiful Bozeman for the League of Cities and Towns Conference in October!



## Save the Date

Join us for the 84th Montana League of Cities and Towns Annual Conference: "Partnering to Build Healthy Communities." The Annual Conference will be held at the Best Western GranTree Inn, in Bozeman, Montana October 7th – 9th.

Registration information and the agenda can be found at: <http://www.mtleague.org>



### EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

## ANGELA SIMONSON

Human Resource/Employment Practices Specialist



Angela joins MMIA after recently working as a Human Resource Specialist for MT Department of Labor and Industry. Her background includes providing Human Resource services in both the private and public sectors, with experience that includes staffing management /recruitment, benefits/wellness administration, training and development, performance management, classification/ compensation and more. She is passionate about educating employees and managers on legal and best practices found within high functioning organizations and takes a practical approach to Human Resources while working to help managers build and maintain effective workforces—their greatest asset!

She earned both her Bachelor's in Social Work and her Master's in Public Administration from the University of Montana-Missoula. She is currently certified nationally as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and also holds her SHRM-CP certification.

Angela is originally from the beautiful Gallatin Valley, where her family settled over six generations ago. She is happy to be back in Montana after living out of state for a number of years—there's no place like home! She looks forward to building working relationships with MMIA and its members and is excited to share her knowledge and creative ideas.

### EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

## AMBER WOMAN,

MHA, AIC-M, AINS  
Workers' Compensation Claims Examiner



Amber joins MMIA from the Montana State Fund where she served as a workers' compensation claim examiner and an asbestos strategy team member. Prior to Montana State Fund, she worked as a licensing outreach coordinator for the Montana State Auditor. While attending school in Missoula, she was a State Health Insurance Program counselor for St. Patrick Hospital, and a Medication Assistance Program manager for Partnership Health Center.

She earned her B.S. in Business Management from the University of Montana and her Master of Health Administration from Montana State University-Billings. She is professionally designated as an Associate in Claims- Management (AIC-M) as well as Associate in General Insurance (AINS) from the Insurance Institute of America.

Amber grew up in Helena, Montana and has returned to raise her family with her husband. She is excited to be a part of the MMIA team and looks forward to meeting its members.

*Welcome, Amber and Angela!*



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## Calendar of Events

**October 7** MMIA Board of Directors Meeting, Bozeman

**9** MMIA Annual Meeting, Bozeman

**12** Columbus Day, Holiday

**November 11** Veteran's Day, Holiday

**26** Thanksgiving Day, Holiday

**December 25** Christmas Day, Holiday

**January 1** New Year's Day, Holiday

