



*Working together for  
Montana's municipalities.*



*Sunrise at Lone Pine State Park Overlook in the City of Kalispell – Photo by Steve Muller*

## Summer 2022

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## PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE LEAGUE CONFERENCE!

The League is looking forward to an exciting, educational, and entertaining League Conference this October 5-7, 2022. Conference events will be held in Kalispell at the Red Lion Hotel and Hilton Garden Inn. Participant registration is now available and can be found on the League's website at [www.mtleague.org/conference](http://www.mtleague.org/conference). Participants have the option to register for the whole conference, or one-day registration is available, as well. Participants will get to hear Keynote Speaker and Corporate Communications Consultant, Les Kodlick, Brig. Gen., USAF, Ret. He will be educating conference attendees on the topic of communications. Les has developed and implemented communication strategies for foreign and US-based organizations and represented several Fortune 500 clients while working with an international public relations firm in New York City. Other conference topics will include, risk management, Municipal-Wide Energy Conservation, Story Telling (it's

not about how much information you deliver, it's about the AH AH!), youth engagement, and many other important and timely topics.

The League expects outstanding participation from all the League Partners. Partners will have the opportunity to host priority exhibit space and make connections with all conference participants, making this conference a true benefit for all involved. Partnership opportunities and all the benefits that are included can be found on the League's Partnership Program page [www.mtleague.org/partners](http://www.mtleague.org/partners). To go along with these great networking and educational opportunities, the League Conference will supply high quality entertainment as well. The Thursday Night Social at SunRift Beer Company will include a performance by Tommy Edwards from The Voice Season 21. The League is excited to see all Partners, Members, and Exhibitors in person for another successful League Conference. ■

**Register today at [mtleague.org/conference/participants!](http://mtleague.org/conference/participants!)**

# PROTECTING YOUR SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

By Tyler Sanders, MMIA Risk Management Strategist

The busy season has arrived, and employment needs can be overwhelming. As the need for employees grows and the hiring process begins, it is important to remember the risks and responsibilities related to hiring short-term, temporary, and seasonal employees. The statistics don't lie: employees with little or no on-the-job experience are amongst the highest at risk of being injured while at work. Whether it's lack of training, experience, or poor decision making, many factors contribute to this evolving issue. Understanding how to protect these unique employees and providing them with adequate time and resources can be difficult to fulfill.

## What you need to know!

The two most common causes of new employees being injured at work are lack of training and on the job experience. Often, seasonal employees are operating equipment, conducting lawn care, cleaning, organizing, or completing tasks that are not done on a regular day-to-day basis. This can be inherently dangerous for those employees as the risks and exposures are often unforeseen while completing such tasks.

Understanding hiring and training requirements as well as your city/town policies is the first step towards keeping seasonal, temporary, and short-term workers safe. Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 39-71-1505(1) (a)(i) requires that all employers must complete a new employee safety orientation for new employees upon hire. This means that all employees including seasonal, temporary, and short-term, must receive a general safety orientation before they begin work. Safety orientations must cover general safety and health requirements such as first aid, reporting procedures, emergency response and evacuation procedures, along with other general safety and health practices listed in your policies. While this is a pivotal step during the hiring process, the training opportunities don't stop there.

## Training requirements for seasonal, temporary, and short-term workers

These employees are not exempt from any safety training requirements listed under the MCA and the Montana Safety Culture Act (MSCA). Understanding specific tasks and jobs that these employees are asked to complete is an important step in providing applicable safety training.



If employees are to complete a specialized task such as weed spraying, confined space entry, working with hazardous chemicals, or operating a specialized piece of equipment, they must be trained before the task begins. It is important to remember that these employees need time to acclimate to new surroundings, new co-workers, and tasks they've potentially never performed. Providing applicable training and allocating time to check in with these employees is the first proactive step towards keeping your short term employees safe. Below is a list of training opportunities that may be applicable for employees.

- ▶ Hazard Communication (HazCom)
- ▶ Respiratory protection
- ▶ Blood Borne Pathogen (BBP)
- ▶ Weed spraying
- ▶ Hand and power tools
- ▶ Confined space
- ▶ Lifting and moving objects
- ▶ Mobile equipment
- ▶ Riding lawn mowers, four-wheelers/ATV, skid steer, loaders, tractors, backhoe, golf cart
- ▶ Lockout/Tagout (LOTO) ■

# TEN HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MMIA EMPLOYEE BENEFITS WELLNESS PROGRAM AND HEALTH SCREENINGS

By Chris Beskid, MMIA EB Member Relations Strategist

**10.** Though the health plan does not cover work related physicals, the screening results can be provided at annual employer-required physicals to reduce costs for any lab work required!

**9.** Vitamin D levels can greatly affect an employee's mood, energy, and a multitude of other factors. MMIA continues to include valuable bonus information like this at no additional cost.

**8.** Our Wellness Employee Participation page provides an up-to-date graph of employee screening registration progress. Visit [www.mmiaeb.net/wellness/participation](http://www.mmiaeb.net/wellness/participation) to see where you stack up against other cities and towns!

**7.** The Health Screening is the only way to earn a free (scratch that, we PAY participants \$50) Health Screening Review call. Employees will be able to review results with the Take Control health coaches. They provide personalized suggestions your employees can easily incorporate into their lifestyle towards better health.

**6.** Healthy employees are more productive, come to work more frequently and are generally happier. The screening and review call provides knowledge and tools to decrease presenteeism within your group.

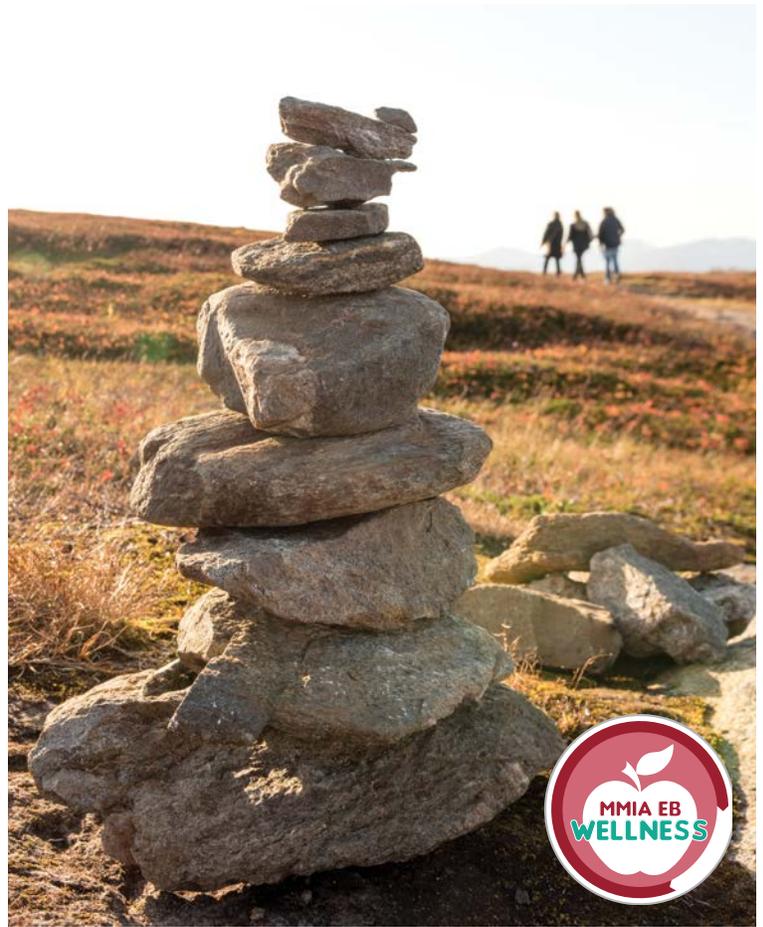
**5.** Nurture and grow a healthy culture! Encourage participants to attend, carpool to the screening, grab some breakfast takeout on the way back to the office. Make it fun!

**4.** It is a great opportunity to lead by example! Be the first in line and tell everyone how easy and helpful this benefit can be! Leadership support absolutely leads to higher participation!

**3.** Several potentially serious conditions can be detected early, providing participants crucial time to get ahead of the issue. Most importantly, this helps safeguard your most precious resource—your employees. In addition, it helps stabilize rates which always helps with tight budgets.

**2.** The Health Screenings are quick and easy with our excellent vendors. You're in, you're out, you're on your way!

**1.** A bonus? In municipal government? What? Yes, it's for reals. Help employees earn \$50 for each 10-minute screening, 10-minute review call, and for watching the 10-minute educational video. That's \$150 for a half hour of their time. And if you can get 80% Employee Participation, all who attended get an extra \$50!



**All employees, spouses and retirees enrolled in an MMIA Employee Benefits medical plan are eligible to participate in the Wellness Program activities to earn incentives. Go to [www.mmiaeb.net/wellness](http://www.mmiaeb.net/wellness) for more information and to sign up for screening appointments. ■**



## MDT SUMMER UPDATE

By Thomas Jodoin, League Deputy Directory and Legal Counsel

The League continues to strengthen its coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to develop a cooperative approach to local decision making on transportation infrastructure in cities and towns and ensure a more uniform approach to design, installation, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure. In the fall of 2021 MDT started sending the city-maintained urban routes template agreement. This “master” agreement applies to urban routes in your community that are city-maintained and was developed in partnership with the League and several representatives from members. That agreement, in addition, to resolving discrepancies in indemnification and maintenance obligation language also allows your city or town to decide on what infrastructure can be installed on the state designated urban highway system routes. These routes are highways and streets in and near incorporated cities with populations over 5,000 or within urban boundaries established by MDT. It is important to remember that ownership of the road or right-of-way is not determinative of whether a road is an urban route maintained by the city. For the larger communities that this is applicable, a map of urban highway system routes can be viewed on MDT’s website at <https://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps/urban-maps.aspx>

The agreement allows those features that do not affect the roadway function, such as sidewalks, shared use paths, and landscaping to be permitted via the standard encroachment process. Facilities that do affect the roadway, such as bulb-outs, are still permitted but must go through a non-standard encroachment review.



*The City of Missoula’s Traffic Services crew striped crosswalks in the heart of Missoula’s downtown with a long-lasting thermoplastic material that saves time and money by lasting about five years instead of one year like the regular water-borne paint. Photo by City of Missoula.*

The League is facilitating a review of MDT’s Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) manual via a 1/8th funding partnership with the seven largest cities in Montana. With those funds the League has contracted with DJ&A to work with MDT retooling the LAG manual to enable local communities to more easily obtain the ability to oversee the design, installation, and administration of transportation infrastructure on state-maintained highways through cities and towns. The League along with DJ&A has identified the Custer Avenue in Helena and the Broadway and Toole Avenues in Missoula as pilot projects to guide the restructuring of the LAG manual.

Finally, the League continues to advocate for its members to MDT for a consistent approach to review and approval of projects subject to MDT jurisdiction. As federal infrastructure money comes to the State, it will be critical that local communities have the ability to implement projects in order to assist MDT in its work. ■

## MMIA WELCOMES NEW STAFF

### Ty Peña, Marketing/Communications Strategist



After graduating from Boise State University in 2014 with a BBA in marketing, Ty spent six years in the healthcare industry. He was excited to make the move to Montana with his wife who is a Helena native. After moving to Helena in June of 2021, Ty worked in the Media Sales department at Spectrum Reach. Ty looks forward to joining the MMIA team, bringing fresh ideas and a creative approach. In his free time, Ty enjoys the outdoors, cooking with his wife, golfing/watching golf, and sharing a duck blind with his lab named Bogey.

## MMIA EXPANDS RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES

You've spoken, and we've listened; MMIA has expanded our risk management services to members. MMIA is excited for our members to experience working with our team of risk management experts, each with their own area of expertise and member service focus.

### Jim Brandley – Liability, Property and Workers' Compensation Risk Management

Jim joined MMIA in 2021. Prior to working for MMIA, he has more than 25 years of experience in liability, property, and workers' compensation coverage working throughout the US for commercial carriers including Insurance Services Office, Vermont Mutual, Montana State Fund, and Auto Insurance Plan Service Office.

### Tyler Sanders – Occupational Safety & Health and Workers' Compensation Risk Management

Tyler joined MMIA in 2022. His work experience includes work for the Montana Department of Labor & Industry as a Safety Compliance Specialist working with public agencies, including cities and towns. Tyler graduated from Montana Tech with a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Safety & Health.

### Derrek Shepherd – Employment Practices/Human Resources Risk Management

Derrek joined MMIA in 2021. Prior to that he spent the last several years as the Human Resource Director for the Montana Judicial Branch. His extensive background includes work as a Civil Rights/EEO Specialist and ADA Coordinator for Department of Public Health and Human Services, Civil Rights Investigator for Department of Labor – Human Rights Bureau, Criminal Investigator for Department of Corrections, and as a law enforcement officer for the City of Great Falls and the City of Santa Maria, CA.

Our team is available to consult with member-owners on-site, on the phone, or over the web. Services include site visits to review operations and exposures, program/policy reviews, training, and more! Call or email us today.

### Risk Management Staff

Name	Position	Phone
Britani Laughery	Operations Manager	406-495-7004
Derrek Shepherd	Human Resource Consultant	406-495-7017
Jim Brandley	Risk Management Strategist	406-495-7025
Tyler Sanders	Risk Management Strategist	406-495-7036

Not sure who to contact? Contact the risk management team at [riskmgmt@mmia.net](mailto:riskmgmt@mmia.net) or 800-635-3089 option 0. ■

## MMIA WELCOMES NEW STAFF

### Matt Post, MMIA Liability/Property Claims Adjuster



Matt has spent most of his adult life in public service. In 2004, he began in the Army, which brought him to Montana. Matt worked for the Helena Police Department from 2009 until earlier this year before coming to the MMIA. He is excited for the new opportunities and the change of pace. Matt has five children ranging from two to 18 years of age. His oldest son is in boot camp currently with the Marine Corps. Matt loves adventure motorcycling and has traveled from Canada to Mexico, and most recently around and through the Rocky Mountains. He is currently in the planning stages to visit the Arctic Circle via Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.

# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM UPDATE

By Jim Brandley, MMIA Risk Management Strategist

## Spring Success

The MMIA Child Abuse Prevention Program Seminars held in May were highly successful and were well attended! A total of 65 participants gathered in the four locations to learn about Praesidium Inc.'s 30 years of experience in Risk Management for Child Abuse Prevention. A wide range of member-owners such as Police Chiefs, School Resource Officers, Detectives, Town Clerks/Treasurers, Human Resource Directors, Librarians, Recreation Managers, Municipal Pool Managers, Court staff, City Attorneys, Public Works Directors, Risk Managers, Mayors, and Social Service professionals came together to learn and share experiences during the 2-hour seminars. Each participant learned how to recognize the signs of abuse, how recognizing the characteristics of abusers can help to prevent them from being hired, and how the characteristics have evolved in the past 25 years. Praesidium's Know Your Score provides the tools, education, and materials to help member-owners develop the necessary skills, policies, and culture to protect children as well as the employees they rely upon.

## Looking Forward

As I write this in June most summer recreation programs, municipal swimming pools, and sports leagues are in full swing. Staff shortages this year have left more work to be



completed by the few employees that remain. That said, please remain vigilant in workplace safety, preventing premise and operational hazards, and have fun this summer!

If you can make time now to engage in the invaluable resources available to you as a member-owner such as the online risk assessment Know Your Score, and the online learning platform Praesidium Academy, please contact me at [jbrandley@mmia.net](mailto:jbrandley@mmia.net), 406-495-7025, or [riskmgmt@mmia.net](mailto:riskmgmt@mmia.net). Otherwise, when the summer winds down and time becomes available once again, I'm available to provide additional seminars and assist you. ■

## MMIA WELCOMES NEW STAFF

### Michelle Manson, Workers' Compensation Claim Examiner



Michelle worked at Montana State Fund for the last five years. Prior to her career as a claims examiner she worked as a retail manager with Shopko and was with them for 13 years. She graduated from the University of Montana with a bachelor's degree in sociology.

She and her boyfriend have five dogs and 11 chickens (Michelle says "You might call me a chicken tender."). She spends most of her free time outside hiking with her dogs, fishing, gold panning, rock hounding or spending time with family or friends.

She has lived in Montana her whole life, and she is very excited about starting her new career at the MMIA and being able to continue to help and work with the great people of our state.

# COMMUNICATION IS VITAL FOR RETURN TO WORK

By Jessica Arnold, MMIA Workers' Compensation Claim Examiner

## Communication is vital, especially when a person is injured.

I personally experienced a major, life-threatening injury several years back while still in school, requiring me to heal at home, away from classmates, friends, and teachers. My class and teacher constantly communicated with me while I was out, and once a week I visited school to stay engaged. I was excited to return my life to normal. I was motivated to get better and be with my friends and classmates. When I came back, I felt like I had never left.

This can transfer to a workplace injury. When someone is hurt at work, it can be one of the worst days of their life. They need communication and support from their employer, coworkers, claims adjuster, friends, and family. Keeping an injured employee engaged in work and the process is crucial to getting them back to work.

Some thoughts that go through an injured worker's mind: Do they blame me for my injury? Will my employer support me in returning to work? Are my coworkers happy to see me? Is my employer glad to have me back? Because of my accident and the work comp claim, I feel like I don't have control over my recovery and when I get to return to work.

Not knowing the answer to these questions can make it harder for an injured employee to return to work. Fear of the unknown can delay healing and return to work by months, potentially preventing them from returning at all.

When the injured employee is communicated with and supported throughout their recovery process, it can make it easier for them to return to work.

Having a solid return-to-work program is essential as well. If employees know what would happen if they were removed from work and knew the steps of returning before being injured it might give a sense of comfort to the process. Knowledge is power.

If an employer reaches out to an employee at least once a week or even every other week just to check in with them, it can make a huge difference. Let them know what is going on. Keep them engaged in the work process. And as soon as you have modified work to accommodate them, offer it. Even if it is an hour a day or four hours once a week, it can get them back into the flow of work and make them excited to want to return. It answers the unknown. If an employer does not know if they have modified work available, there are certified rehabilitation counselors who can help with that.

I know when I was injured, the communication and having people reach out got me motivated to return to life, school, and my new normal. As employers, supervisors, and coworkers, we have an opportunity to do the same for our most valuable resource...our employees. ■

## MMIA WELCOMES NEW STAFF

### Tyler Sanders, Risk Management Strategist



Tyler is a new addition to your Risk Management team here at MMIA. He was born and raised right here in Montana and says, "I could never get myself to leave." He attended college at Montana Tech in Butte, MT where he played four years of football and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Safety and Health. His previous position was with the Montana DLI Safety and Health Bureau, so there is a great chance that he may have met several of you over the past couple of years and he is excited to see some familiar faces. He is here as a resource for each of you. Whether you have needs for safety trainings, on-site consultation visits at your facilities, or just simply have workplace safety related questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact him.



*Working together for  
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## LEAGUE-MMIA PHOTO CONTEST!

# YOUR PHOTO HERE

Find out more information at [www.mtleague.org/photo-contest](http://www.mtleague.org/photo-contest)

*Photo submitted by the City of Townsend in the 2021 Photo contest*

## MMIA WELCOMES NEW STAFF

### **Maria Gonzales, Workers' Compensation Claim Examiner**



Maria started her career in the insurance industry 20 years ago, working as a Workers' Compensation claims examiner for the last five years. Maria and her husband have four daughters, twin granddaughters, and two dachshunds (their only boys). She enjoys anything that includes spending quality time with family and friends, including golfing, boating, cooking, and fine dining. She is very excited for her new career at MMIA.