

The Municipal RISK MANAGER

SUMMER 2020

A Publication of the Maine Municipal Association

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FUND

MMA's Unemployment Compensation Fund (UC Fund) was created in 1978 at the request of MMA members to assist them in meeting their obligations under the Employment Security Act in an efficient and cost effective manner. Never before in the history of the UC Fund have the events been more challenging and the need for help been so great. During this difficult period, the UC Fund has been proudly assisting our members to navigate through the changing rules, massive filings and rampant fraud. Through the months of March, April and May of this year the UC Fund processed more claims than those typically filed over a five (5) year period. All the while, Denise Kolreg our Unemployment Compensation Fund Coordinator has worked tirelessly to help our municipal employees and protect our communities. Please join all of us at MMA Risk

Management Services as we recognize and thank Denise for her dedication, support and kindness. We thank you Denise.

The benefits of belonging to the UC Fund are most evident during difficult fiscal times which is why the UC Fund maintains a conservative funding strategy, and thus is able to support our members through this period of high claims and extended benefits without sacrificing the financial stability of the Fund. For more informa-



tion about the UC Fund or if you would just like to say hello, please call Denise at 1(800) 590-5583. 🏠



Ed MacDonald Safety Enhancement Grants and Scholarships

The Maine Municipal Association has been awarding safety grants and scholarships to members of the Workers' Compensation fund since 1999, bestowing more than \$5 million in the funding of 3,938 safety enhancement grants and 489 scholarship grants. These programs offer financial incentives to members of the Fund by supporting their purchase of safety equipment or safety services that will assist in reducing the frequency and/or severity of workplace injuries. **The Spring 2020 Grant Committee received 102 grant applications and awarded 93 for a total grant distribution of \$140,190.**

****Please note that application deadlines have changed**.** The deadlines for the Safety Enhancement Grants are now **April 15** and **September 15** of each year.

For more information about any of the Maine Municipal Association Risk Management Service programs, including the Ed MacDonald Safety Enhancement Grants eligibility and applications, please visit our website at <https://www.memun.org/Insurance-Services/Risk-Management-Services/Grants-Scholarships> or call us at 1-800-590-5583. 🏠

Risk Management Advisories

MMA Risk Management Services is announcing a new *Advisory Section* to Maine Municipal Association's website. The Advisories are located at: <https://memun.org/Insurance-Services/Risk-Management-Services/RMS-Advisories>. Risk Management Services is dedicating this space to alert members of important issues that relate to your participation in the Property & Casualty Pool, Workers' Compensation Fund and the Unemployment Compensation Fund. Please monitor this new feature as we continue to add further tools and information. 🏠

Returning to Normal Operations

Returning buildings and the equipment that supports the building's function to normal operation after an extended idle period, such as following the COVID-19 pandemic, can increase the risk of equipment failure, particularly during startup. Different types of deterioration, such as sagging of rotating elements and settling of lubricants, which is largely caused by gravity, as well as oxidation of metal parts, can occur.



In most cases, building service equipment (HVAC, electric power distribution, plumbing systems, etc.) will have remained in service during the shutdown. Whether or not these systems were shut down, their proper operation should be verified before re-occupancy of the building(s).

Qualified contractors or employees familiar with the proper operation of the equipment should verify that the equipment has no sign of leakage, is maintaining proper operating temperature, and that fluid levels are sufficient. Where applicable, equipment cycling should occur within the normal operation parameters.

Electricians should restore electrical loads slowly to prevent damage to electrical systems. Maintenance personnel should monitor equipment operation as power is restored.

Investigate any unexpected conditions and resolve them prior to further operation. Normal preventive maintenance steps should be taken, and a schedule of maintenance reestablished.

Test emergency systems, such as emergency power generators, as soon as practical for proper operation in accordance with original equipment manufacturer (OEM) guidelines and normal practices. A service contractor or qualified technician should physically observe testing of the emergency equipment.

Restoration of Equipment to Normal Service

The necessary steps to restore equipment to normal service following an extended period will depend on the amount and type of usage the equipment experienced during the shutdown. Age-related deterioration occurs in all equipment, even when equipment is not being operated.

For equipment that was shut down and not used:

- Consult original equipment manufacturer (OEM) guidance for initial setup or returning equipment to service.
- Develop a checklist for the equipment restoration process, including verification of oil and coolant levels, removal of desiccant, checking for obstructions such as blocking or strapping that was placed to prevent unwanted movement, etc.
- Replace lubricants and cooling fluids for critical equipment, if necessary.
- Consult manufacturer's guidelines for startup and break-in periods. Most equipment should not be operated at full capacity on restart.
- Test installed safeguards, controls and interlocks as applicable during the restoration process.
- For close tolerance machinery, calibration and alignment checks may be needed to help ensure sensors and measuring devices are functioning properly.
- If possible, verify that moving parts of each piece of equipment are free and unobstructed prior to energizing.
- Continuously monitor parameters for proper operation (fluid levels, oil pressure, temperature, etc.) during the startup process.
- Increase the inspection frequency following restoration to service until normal operating conditions are established.
- Check for fluid leaks, water infiltration or pest nests that could cause additional hazards.

Repurposed Equipment

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, your equipment may have been repurposed for an alternate use. This repurposing may have presented new exposures to your equipment. As you return to normal operations, it is important to return the equipment configuration to its original use. Be sure to pay attention to restoring alterations and verifying that the alternate use did not result in a detrimental condition.

Develop a checklist for the equipment restoration process. This checklist should reverse any steps taken when the equipment was altered. It also should include routine maintenance per the manufacturer's guidelines.

Thoroughly examine repurposed equipment, paying attention to safety guards, any equipment parts that may have been stressed differently than during normal operation. Predictive testing (nondestructive examination, vibration analysis, lube oil analysis, etc.) should be used as necessary to verify machine integrity.

Repurposing machinery may create debris that is not present during normal operation. Clean unusual substances from all areas of the equipment.

Repurposing equipment may accelerate the normal wear and tear of parts such as belts, chains and bearings. Inspect and replace these components as necessary prior to returning the equipment to regular service. Implement a more frequent inspection schedule until normal wear patterns are reestablished. ■■

Property & Casualty Pool Members

We would like to send a reminder to all of our members that the 2020-2021 P&C Pool Coverage Documents, Auto ID Cards and your invoice have been emailed. Please look for an email from MMA Risk Management – Underwriting. As always, we thank you for your continued dedication and membership.

Avoid COVID-19 Scams

Scammers are using fear and the unknown to take advantage of everyone that they can in an attempt to obtain personal information and steal from you and your employer. During this pandemic many of us are working from home and conducting business through emails, video conferencing and personal phones. Cyber criminals are using the COVID-19 virus to deploy dangerous malware onto your computer and ultimately into your organization.

The emails and posts may be promoting awareness and prevention tips or fake information about outbreaks in your area. Other cyber-attacks are asking you to donate to victims or offering advice on treatments all in the hope of having you click on a link or opening malicious email attachments.

Please follow the guidance below to reduce the risk of being a victim.

- Treat any Coronavirus email with a high degree of suspicion and we do not recommend that you click on any attachments or links unless you are 100% confident that it comes from a trusted source.
- Common scams may offer virus vaccine and treatments and ask for personal information or for you to complete an attached form to verify eligibility.
- Do not visit untrusted sites that contain COVID-19 information.
- Use only trusted sites such as www.cdc.gov and www.coronavirus.gov and <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc> for information about the virus.



- Treat any electronic communication that relates to governmental benefits and check suspiciously. Scammers are asking for bank account information and social security numbers for direct deposits.
- Never surrender personal or company credentials to COVID-19 email requests.

Scammers are setting up websites to sell bogus products, and using fake emails and social media posts to take your money and get your personal information. They are impersonating business partners and governmental institutions in an attempt to get users to open the messages and unleash malware. Don't fall for their traps. Follow the normal on-line tips to protect yourself and most importantly do not click on links or respond to emails that you do not know and trust. 🏠

Spring Cleaning

Never before in our memory has the term spring cleaning held so many potential benefits and ramifications. So as the season changes from winter to spring, and now to summer, many of us are attempting to clean, sanitize and sort through the clutter that has accumulated over the winter months. Many work place injuries involving slips, trips and falls are caused by the pure fact that the areas are cluttered, poorly organized or just a mess.

There are many important factors that should be considered when organizing the office environment. Considerations such as cleanliness, ergonomics, and maintenance are all critical elements of a proper "housekeeping" plan. A basic housekeeping plan as directed by OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.22 should involve all staff and volunteers while attempting to identify and address such hazards as:

- Cleaning Supplies
- Food Storage and Handling
- Chemical Storage
- Air Quality Standards
- Storage, and
- Sanitation



Paperwork is a material of life that we have all become all too accustomed to working with, or in some cases being enveloped by. Excessive amounts of paper or other materials can create a harmful environment. Paperwork which is allowed to pile up creates such hazards as a falling risk, a tripping hazard or even increasing the risk of fire. It is recommended to organize and retain documents in an appropriate fashion that eliminate hazards.

Careful consideration should also be given to the type of cleaning supplies that are used/required. All cleaning supplies must be clearly marked and stored in proper spill proof containers. Proper training in the use of cleaning supplies is critical as well as the use of personal protective equipment to avoid chemical exposures. It is also recommended that cleaning supplies be stored out of the reach of children and that the phone number of the local poison control office be clearly posted.

Restrooms should be properly maintained and cleaned daily. Ensure that such necessities such as bath tissue, soap and paper towels are available and in

Story Continued on Next Page

Navigating Stress and Adapting to Change



We have all been dealing with an increase in stress with the onset of the Coronavirus and the Federal and State response to slow the outbreak. This response has sent many of us to work from home, trying to do our job and balance child care, home care, and helping the seniors in our families. At this point in our lives it is absolutely NORMAL and TYPICAL for our worry, anxiety, stress and even changes in our moods to occur and even increase. We are unable to control what we once thought to be controllable and stress can take on many forms.

We were contacted by a municipal member with the suggestion of MMA hosting a webinar on helping municipal employees cope with the stress and changes encountered in our lives since the pandemic arrived in Maine.

MMA Risk Management Services reached out to Dr. Laurie Cyr-Martel and asked her to provide two presentations on Navigating Stress and Adapting to Change webinars. She has over thirty-five years of experience in the field of emergency services and mental health and wellness. She provides training and consultation for public safety departments and organizations to assist in their health and wellness.

These two sessions – one on May 21 and the other on June 4, were free of charge to all members of the Maine Municipal Association and directed towards all levels and departments of municipal employees. Her presentation discussed what happens and continues to happen to our brains and bodies given stressful times. She provided strategies to navigate these turbulent times and to assist our members to maintain their health. If you would like to view this presentation it is located in the member's area on the MMA website at: <https://memun.org/Member-Center/Video-Training-Library>. 📺

Spring Cleanup (cont'd)

adequate supply. Also ensure that the floors and surfaces are clean and that no slip/trip hazards are present.

Kitchen and food preparation areas are at high risk for health hazards and the opportunity to spread disease. In an attempt to avoid such hazards it is recommended to:

- Provide sufficient trash containers,
- Have all spills on the counters or floors cleaned promptly to avoid injuries sustained from slips and falls on wet surfaces.
- Ensure that refrigerators are cleaned at least once per week,
- Properly wipe down surfaces, stoves, microwave and sinks daily,
- Dispose of trash at least daily to avoid the attracting insects, mice, rats and other pests.

This time of year is a perfect reminder to us all that we should clean our work areas and help prevent accidents and injuries to others as well as ourselves. Through proper planning and the simple application of house cleaning practices, injuries at the work place can be wiped clean. 📺

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does Fine Arts Coverage Work?

The Property & Casualty Pool automatically provide \$50,000 of coverage for fine arts owned by you or in your care, custody or control, to the extent of your interest in them.

Fine Arts is defined as "paintings, etchings, pictures, tapestries, sculptures and other bona fide works of art, of rarity, historical value, or artistic merit, including rare or ancient books, manuscripts, maps, deeds and papers."

The Property & Casualty Pool covers Fine Arts:

1. If, at the time of the commencement of this Certificate or prior to the occurrence of a covered loss or damage, whichever is later, the Named Member has provided us with an appraisal accepted by us regarding the stated value of an object or we have otherwise agreed in writing to the stated value of an object, we shall pay, in the event of covered loss or damage, the least of:
 - the fair market value of the object at the time of the loss or damage;
 - the cost of reasonably restoring the object to its condition immediately before the loss or damage;
 - the cost of replacing the object with a substantially identical object; or
 - The stated value of the object.
2. If, at the time of the commencement of this Certificate or prior to the occurrence of a covered loss or damage, whichever is later, the Named Member has NOT provided an appraisal accepted by us regarding the stated value of an object and we have NOT otherwise agreed in writing to the stated value of an object, we shall pay, in the event of covered loss or damage, the least of:
 - the fair market value of the object at the time of the loss or damage;
 - the cost of reasonably restoring the object to its condition immediately before the loss or damage;
 - the cost of replacing the object with a substantially identical object; or
 - \$5,000.



The Municipal Risk Manager

The Municipal Risk Manager is published seasonally to inform you of developments in municipal risk management which may be of interest to you in your daily business activities. The information in these articles is general in nature and should not be considered advice for any specific risk management or legal question; you should consult with legal counsel or other qualified professional of your own choice.

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