



Safety Bulletin  
March 2024

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### Seasonal Workforce/Volunteers

Generally, a seasonal employee is one who works 120 days a year or less for the employer. These days need not be consecutive. A seasonal employee is one who works for a specific period for a specific season of the employer.

Summertime often brings a need to fill in labor gaps by hiring seasonal workers for municipal jobs, such as at summer camps, swimming pools, and with schools and public works departments. These hires, often high school and college students create safety and liability concerns for municipalities – risks that should not be taken lightly just because the extra staff will be hired for a short term.



Outdoor summer work increases the potential for common seasonal ailments such as heat stroke, dehydration, severe sunburn, poison ivy, and even a lightning strike. Lyme disease, contracted by bite from an infected tick, is another serious risk for those working outdoor summer jobs.

The summer months also bring added liability exposures. With pools and municipal beaches open for the season, water safety is a crucial issue. In public works departments and schools, seasonal maintenance employees may be working around motorized vehicles and mechanical equipment (e.g., chainsaws and heavy-duty lawnmowers) with which they are unfamiliar.

Summertime activities increase both workers' compensation and liability exposures with the addition of temporary staff. Moreover, monetary payouts do not necessarily end when the working student goes back to school or when an adult worker's tenure ends. With a catastrophic injury, medical expenses could reach tens of thousands of dollars, and the liability can remain with the municipality years after the employee is off the payroll.

### Risk Mitigation Checklist

The three most important things that a municipality can do to mitigate risks associated with hiring seasonal workers are: pre-screen, train and supervise.

- Pre-screen any employee working with children (for example, lifeguards and camp counselors). This should include thorough background checks through the state's Criminal Offender Record Information system and the National Sex Offender Registry, as well as former employer reference checks. Driving records should be thoroughly checked for any employee operating a vehicle. For all employees, ensure that proper and relevant certifications are in place and valid – such as auto and equipment operator's licenses, lifeguard certifications, first aid, and CPR. Pre-

employment physicals may also be necessary for certain jobs.

- Take the time to train all seasonal employees properly and thoroughly. Make sure they know how to use equipment and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) competently and safely. Include temporary employees in any tailgate safety talks that are being offered to full-time workers. Make sure seasonal workers know what to do in case of emergencies, such as when an injury or property damage occurs, or when inclement weather or an electrical storm hits. Review safety manuals and instructions with all seasonal workers, including listing what equipment they are and are not authorized to use. Be sure to have them verify, with a signature, that they have received and reviewed the information.
- Do not leave seasonal workers unsupervised, under any circumstances. Significant and catastrophic injuries could occur when summer workers are left alone operating vehicles or serving as a lifeguard at a municipal pool or beach. A full-time, adult employee should always be present and supervising part-time summer workers. This can help prevent horseplay and serious injuries.
- Carefully examine safety issues in specific areas where employees will be working. For example, perform checks on playground equipment and be diligent about pool and beach safety. Remind employees about summer storm and lightning safety and work with them to identify heat stress and dehydration quickly when it occurs. Ensure that all employees know to report hazardous conditions promptly.
- Ensure that all Mandated Reporting requirements are met.

To help you get through the peak season, here are six best practices for hiring seasonal labor:

1. Plan for peak times and hire early.

It is important to start planning for your peak season early so you have enough time for the recruiting and hiring process. Early planning means you can hit the ground running and have first pick of the best talent.

2. Leverage multiple hiring sources.

While many companies use staffing consultants to hire their seasonal staff, this can be an expensive option. Make use of other, less expensive sources of seasonal labor, including past employees, friends or family of current employees, students, and retirees.

3. Do not skimp on training.

Just because seasonal hires are temporary does not mean you should not train them on your product or service, their job duties, or your organizational culture. Many companies hope their seasonal employees will learn on the job, but placing a brand new, untrained employee on the front lines of a peak-season rush could lead to low productivity, unhappy customers, and a disgruntled worker. Remember: your customers will hold your part-time and seasonal workers to the same standards as any other employee.

4. Use incentives for retention if needed.

Regardless of the economy, seasonal employees tend to have high turnover. Consider



putting incentives in place that will increase retention, lowering your total labor costs. Examples include bonuses, discounts on company goods or services, access to development programs for regular employees or preference when it comes to hiring for long-term positions.

6. Consider long-term options.

A temporary hire may have the potential to become a full-time employee. Since you have already put in the time and effort to train them, why resign yourself to letting them walk out the door at the end of the season? Keep an eye on your temporary workers to identify their potential for long-term employment.

7. Remember that the rules still apply.

When it comes to temporary labor, there is a temptation for employers to be lax in their enforcement of standard Human Resource policies. This attitude can result in serious and costly consequences, like non-compliance with labor laws and regulations.

ICRMA has a Volunteer Manual available to the members located on the ICRMA website. <https://www.icrma.org/members/risk-and-safety-model/liability/>

If members need training assistance in any of these areas contact Robert May, Director of Loss Control.

### **ICRMA Training Update**

University Session – March 28 - Mandatory Reporting