

Minutes State Safety & Return to Work Group Meeting



Meeting Date : 04/25/2024

Room : MSF Board Room

3 Pages

Time 1 :00 pm

Meeting Attendees

Rob Virts - DOA	Nathan Showalter - Rev	
Andrew Pitsch-DOA	Amanda Murphy - Rev	
Larry Ridge-MT Historical Society	Duncan Adams - Rev	
Mark Carpenter – Sec. of State	Genevieve Lighthiser-State Library	
Alice Flesch - MDT	Julie Balsam-Board of Public Education	
Justin Ulmen- MDT	Beth Strandberg-Military Affairs	
Kirby Fugle - FWP		
Charlotte Hafer - DOC		
Mike Jezowski-DPHHS		
Jennifer Alger, MT Arts Council		
Dan Messerli – Legislative		
Herb Byers - MSF		
Eric Schorer-MSF		
Dan Johnson - MSF		
Stormy Tuffield - MSF		

Meeting Notes

Rob Virts- Program Manager for WCMB – Introductions, Andrew Pitsch's role at WCMB


- Andrew has been directed to follow-up on claims that are filed, identify what agencies are doing to get people back to work when a claim occurs, follow up on transitional duty assignments within state agencies, reduce indemnity claims, identify transitional duties for effective early return to work. He will be spending a lot of time on the claim's management aspect.

Eric Schorer- RTW Consultant at MSF – Position role/responsibilities, Importance of online claim filing

- Eric's position was recently created by MSF.
- Role will be to have tough discussions with injured workers and determine what their plan is to get back to work, and work on safety policies and return to work procedures to see if they can be improved.
- MSF is working on changes to the online FROI process. Starting approximately mid-May 2024, state agencies will now be able to upload information like wages, employee signed FROI's, and work status forms when submitting an initial claim online. However, once you leave the page, you cannot go back and upload documents at a later date/time. There still is no current plan for electronic signatures on FROI's.
- Entering an injured worker's physical address and the loss location address on the FROI will help MSF identify work from home claims.
- Department Codes being including on FROI's are vital. Agencies have multiple locations, so knowing department codes can help easily identify loss locations within agencies.

Dan Johnson-Safety Management Consultant at MSF - Designing safe, shared workstations

- Shared workstations, aka hoteled stations, are presenting high, long-term risk potential. It is vitally important to both educate new employees on safety and ergonomic programs, as well as certify all remote workstations before employees sit down to begin working at them. There is a PDF

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document on safemt.gov that can help guide you with this process. Virtual work assessments for all new employees working from home could be an efficient manner to certify a remote workstation.


- Last policy year, there were 18 work from home claims, and so far none this policy year.
- MSF has an upcoming safety workshop on June 20, 2024, from 9-11 AM. You can register online at safemt.com. The topic will be about “risk with new employees, and what to do about them”.

Andrew Pitsch-Enterprise Safety and Workers’ Compensations Specialist for WCMB

- A key component of the Montana Safety Culture Act is for each agency to implement a written safety program. If your agency does not have one or wants to make sure their current version is up to date, please visit workerscomp.mt.gov for a Written Safety Program Manual Template.
 - If your agency is struggling to effectively manage early return to work, WCMB has created an Early Return to Work Flowchart that will help guide your agency to identify and maintain transitional duty assignments.
- OSHA 300 Log – Agencies are required to complete their log by 01/31/2024. Completed OSHA 300a logs and summaries should be posted in a visible location from 02/01/2024 thru 04/30/2024 on your agencies bulletin boards. Do NOT throw away the old OSHA log/summary, rather file them in a secure location in case of future inspection.
 - DLI’s compliance bureau will be asking to see agency OSHA logs when they are conducting inspections.
- A Slip, Trip, Falls Analysis is being conducted by WCMB. This is not an investigation, and it will not affect MSF’s liability decision(s). This project’s mission is to identify potential trends in where these types of incidents and injures are occurring, and institute corrective actions to prevent recurrence. WCMB has been asked to provide more accurate data to support requests for corrective action.
 - So far, the accident locations with some of the most types of slip, trips, and falls since January 2024 are:
 - 400 Veterans Drive in Columbia Falls, MT
 - 302 N. Roberts St. in Helena, MT
 - 301 S. Park in Helena, MT
- WCMB will be meeting with state agencies starting Fall of 2024 to discuss our newly created Safety & Performance Dashboard. The mission of the Safety & Performance Dashboard is to provide constructive feedback on whether state agencies are exceeding, meeting, or requiring development of their safety programs, performance standards, and return to work efforts. State agencies require this feedback, so they understand opportunities for improvement and take corrective actions. This Dashboard is individualized to each State Agencies’ unique operating characteristics and class codes, and measures 5 key components: Safety Commitment, Incident Management, Return to Work Management, Training & Awareness, and Management Commitment. Performance evaluations will take place annually, and capture data for the current policy year. WCMB is responsible for tracking overall compliance and effectiveness of State agencies in their management of work-related injuries and occupational diseases. To meet its oversight and reporting obligations, the WCMB must receive information from each agency detailing its efforts and outcomes.

Rob Virts – WCMB

- Position Recruitment – WCMB still has a Safety Position that has not yet been filled. Rob expects to advertise for the position in mid-June and have someone in place by the end of July.
 - One of the new responsibilities of the individual will be Safety Related Training for state agencies. This individual will also be able to assist with agency safety committee

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development, BEAT and EAP updates and development as well as any other safety related needs.

- June Renewal Meetings – These are the annual renewal meetings to review agency work comp premium for the upcoming year. If your agency would like an in-person renewal meeting, there are still some dates available. So far, 13 agencies are scheduled and those are Administration, Military Affairs, FWP, Revenue, Agriculture, DNRC, MDT, Commerce, DLI, DEQ, Justice, Corrections, and DPHHS. Please reach out to Rob if your agency is interested in scheduling. Meetings will be held at your agency in hopes that upper management and agency directors will be in attendance.
 - If you are a smaller agency and would like to schedule a renewal meeting, please let Rob or Andrew know.
 - Agencies not electing an in-person renewal meeting will have their renewal information sent via deadhead mail to them by the end of June.
- Agency Claim Data- As of 03/31/202 for policy year 2024, state agencies have had a total of 559 claims and total paid to date is \$880,102.00. WCMB projects around 745 claims by 07/01/24. Our goal every year is to have less claims than the year previous. Slips, trips, and falls continue to occur at an alarming rate, and are the leading cause of injuries for state agencies. For FY24 there have already been 176 slip, trip, and fall claims. This injury category has comprised 31% of state agency claims since 2018 and is also 31% of claims for this Fiscal Year. The second leading reason for injury is Use of Force/Assault with 87 claims.
 - MDT and Corrections have both lowered claim counts this policy year.
 - DPHHS has increased their claim count and lead all agencies with 185 claims to date.
- Discussed a document titled “Montana State Agency Suggested Safety Program Parameters”, which is essentially a full recap of the Montana Safety Culture Act (MSCA). This document is intended to assist agencies as a starting point in developing a safety program and safety culture.
- Discussed DLI’s most cited hazards for state agencies currently, and that is the lack of documented task specific safety training, and regular refresher safety training. Task specific safety training must be conducted for all hazards pertinent to the job. This includes the operation of heavy equipment and specialized equipment for the job.
- WCMB recommends periodic self-inspections of all facilities. Should be occurring at least quarterly to stay in compliance with the MSCA.
- WCMB also strongly recommends accident investigations for all incidents and illnesses to stay in compliance with MSCA. This also helps to reduce potential fraudulent activities with claim filing.

Meeting Wrap-Up

- Send suggestions for future meeting topics to Rob.

Upcoming Meetings

Date/Time

- April 25, 2024 – SSG meeting – 1:00pm – 2:30pm – In Person – Location TBD**
- June 2024 – Policy Renewal Meetings – Individual Agency Meetings**
- October 24, 2024 – SSG meeting – 1:00pm – 2:30pm – Virtual – TEAMS**