

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



The City of Rock Hill drew thousands of spectators from around the world during the 2017 UCI BMX World Championships in July (left). Photo: Craig Dutton. Lexington councilmembers and mayor view the eclipse (right). Photo: Town of Lexington.

Cities welcome the world

You know it's a big deal if you're looking for French and Spanish translators.

The City of Rock Hill tapped public school students, Winthrop University students and volunteers to help bridge the language gap during the 10-day UCI BMX World Championships in July.

City officials had been planning the cycling event ever since the city submitted the winning bid to host it — beating out Bangkok, Thailand — three years ago. Attendance exceeded 19,400 individuals, with projected cumulative attendance for the week from multiday admissions estimated at 50,000 - 55,000, more than double the size of early estimates of cumulative attendance.

The competition drew 3,700 riders from 48 countries to the Novant Health BMX Supercross Track and delivered a \$19.2 million direct economic impact.

John Taylor, Rock Hill's director of parks, recreation and tourism, said the city created two committees, one to work on logistics and the other "to get the community excited about it,

making sure people took pride in their city, cleaned up their community and then rolled out the red carpet."

The event's webcast of a preview show and challenge races broke viewership records with more than 513,000 views, making it the most viewed challenge class races in BMX World Championships history.

"We were so proud to be a part of this," said Taylor. "We heard things like, 'You transcended our sport to a level it's never been before.'"

From international cycling to statewide softball and baseball championships to the solar eclipse of a lifetime, South Carolina cities and towns said, "Welcome" this summer.

How to be visitor friendly

This summer marked the twelfth time the City of Dillon Parks and Recreation Department has hosted either a Dixie Softball or Dixie Youth Baseball State Tournament in the past 15 years, an event that averaged 1,200 people for its first two days.

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City of Camden firefighters view
the eclipse. Photo: City of Camden.

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As the host, the city provided the playing fields with lights, scoreboards and a sound system. City staff maintained the fields during the tournament and operated the press box area, which includes scoreboard operators, official scorekeepers and public announcers. City employees also operated the admission gates and provided police and emergency medical personnel.

“The more you can do to make the teams and visitors feel welcome, the better the experience is for everyone,” said Dillon City Manager Glen Wagner. “Hosting outdoor events over multiple days is stressful for the staff, teams, parents and fans due to the unknown — the weather.”

While embracing visitors is key during a multiday event, he said it’s also important to keep city employees in mind.

“A thunderstorm during the day can really put everyone on edge because teams want to play, parents want them to play, and if the staff does not have adequate equipment or material to get the fields dry and running again, it can cause issues,” said Wagner. “We realize this and make every effort to provide the staff and equipment needed to make sure the teams do not have to stay any longer than scheduled, because we know that the longer they stay, the more it costs them for lodging, food and missed work.”

While the City of Dillon has had many years to fine tune its hosting operation, there’s always something new to consider next time.

“One thing that we did learn this year — and we are not sure how we are going to implement it — is that spectators are

looking for a more convenient way to pay for admissions and concessions, such as by debt or credit cards,” said Wagner. “This is something we may have to look into in the near future to help us stay user friendly.”

A once-in-a-lifetime event

On August 21, two minutes of darkness drew tourists from around the world.

Dozens of cities and towns in South Carolina celebrated their status within the path of totality of a transcontinental, total solar eclipse. The Georgetown Police Department made calls to neighboring law enforcement agencies to let them know that if Georgetown needed help with eclipse crowds, those agencies would be getting a call.

But Georgetown Police Chief Kelvin Waites emphasized the city’s welcome mat, which saw traffic from Poland, Quebec and Germany.

“Our officers were deployed with the mindset of being ambassadors for the City of Georgetown,” he said. “They were able to answer questions and give directions to people. They were given specific assignments and were placed strategically around the city in areas most affected, so that our residents and visitors would see our presence and feel at ease to be able to fully enjoy the event.”

For safety, the department ensured that every major street that was blocked off with barricades was also reinforced with vehicles.

Extending southern hospitality and an inviting atmosphere were just part of the city’s duties, said Debra Bivens, finance director for the City of Georgetown. She listed crowd control, safety, emergency medical response, restroom facilities,



The City of Dillon welcomed softball players and visitors from across the state (left). Hundreds of softball players competed in a statewide softball tournament in Dillon (below). Photos: Nigel Enoch.



vendors for the park area, water distribution and hydration stations as the other duties.

“It was extremely hard to plan for the unknown,” said Bivens. “But everyone did a great job, and we did it while continuing the normal processes of running the city and ensuring the safety of all of our residents and guests.”

In the City of Clemson, there were about 50,000 visitors along with permanent residents and returning Clemson University students.

“Naturally our biggest responsibility was the overall public safety,” said Clemson Police Chief Jimmy Dixon. “On this day in particular, we had to prepare for traffic control and medical services.”

He said the city police department, the university police, Pickens County Emergency Management and Clemson University Fire and EMS put together a plan for the eclipse that was very similar to how they work during home football games.

“The day went smoothly,” said Dixon. “And overall, it was a great day and event.”

In the Midlands, business at hotels surged during the long eclipse weekend, according to STR, Inc., a hotel data, analytics and marketplace insight firm. In downtown Columbia, hotel occupancy

was up 171 percent, while average revenue per available room was up 478 percent.

Erring on the side of caution

As for lessons learned?

“As an agency, we walked away being able to reinforce what we already knew — That we can always scale back personnel and resources if we need to, but we have to prepare for the greatest scenario,” said Georgetown’s Waites.

In the Town of Lexington, “Eclipse Fest,” held at the Icehouse Amphitheater drew 800 spectators, while Gibson Pond Park and Lexington Square Park drew several hundred more eclipse watchers.

“The town always errs on the side of caution and is prepared for the worst and hopes for the best,” said Lexington Mayor Steve MacDougall.

The City of Orangeburg drew 6,000 - 8,000 visitors for eclipse day. John Singh, assistant city manager, said the city’s biggest responsibility was to maintain public safety in a situation when it was difficult to gauge the number of anticipated visitors. He said the city would keep looking at ways to enhance the visitor experience under circumstances when the number of visitors is difficult to predict.

NEWS BRIEFS

Realtor.com ranked the **City of Florence** No. 1 in the nation for “aging in place,” citing its regional medical hub and more than 22,000 housing units that have been designed or modified for older residents.

Charleston Water System and **Mount Pleasant Waterworks** made the list of 70 employers in the 2017 “Best Places to Work in South Carolina,” a list published by the Best Companies Group program in partnership with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and SC Biz News. The list is based on an employer benefits and policies questionnaire and an employee engagement and satisfaction survey.

Jetsetter.com named the **City of Beaufort** No. 5 in a list of the nine “cutest small towns.”

Thrillist.com named the **City of Columbia** one of eight American cities “you should visit before they’re too popular,” calling Columbia “a city on the rise.” The website also named Columbia to a list of “Great American Cities Where You Can Still Buy a House on a \$50K Salary.”

The cities of **Columbia, Greenville, Marion, North Charleston, Rock Hill** and **Spartanburg** were among the 258 cities and towns nationwide to be named a Playful City USA community by KaBOOM!, the national nonprofit dedicated to play for America’s children. Each has received the recognition at least four times before. Playful City USA recognizes cities and towns that ensure children, particularly those from low-income families, get “balanced and active play.”

Firefighters press safety in October



City of Camden firefighters used clown skits to teach safety lessons.



Firefighters with puppets visit elementary schools and daycare centers during National Fire Prevention Week in the Town of Dillon to teach children the importance of fire drills, match safety, emergency meeting places, and to stop, drop and roll if clothing is on fire.

“It takes us about seven days to visit everyone,” said Dillon Fire Chief Keith Bailey. “We normally start at the elementary schools at 8:30 in the mornings, and we are usually done by noon each day.”

Firefighters, dressed in personal protective equipment and their self-contained breathing apparatus and mask, also show the children their firefighting equipment.

National Fire Prevention Association’s fire safety week is October 8 - 14, although departments spend all year teaching fire safety, inspecting structures and training staff. Last year, South Carolina suffered 77 fire fatalities, according to the Office of State Fire Marshal. As of August, 70 lives in the state had been lost to fire.

In the City of Laurens, Fire Chief Bill Hughes said the department works to achieve a high Insurance Services Office rating, in part, by putting fire safety tips in customers’ utility bills and sending a firefighter to speak about fire safety at

apartment buildings, industrial plants, retirement communities and schools.

ISO’s Fire Suppression Rating Schedule evaluates four categories of fire suppression — fire department, emergency communications, water supply and community risk reduction.

“We try to document (community risk reduction activities) to show the closest we can get to 100 percent of the population,” said Hughes of the department’s public education efforts.

For fire safety week, Laurens Fire Department officials go through their municipal checklist to make sure they are completing it. The department checks city buildings twice a year, which is also part of the ISO point system, along with annual safety inspections of the 750 - 800 occupied buildings in the city. Safety checks include exit lights, fire extinguishers, emergency lights if required, proper storage of hazardous chemicals and occupancy limits.

Safety week is also typically when the Laurens Fire Department visits schools, said Hughes.

This year, the Camden Fire Department won a Municipal Achievement Award for its troop of firefighters who dress up as clowns — Nozzle, Flame and Snorkel — and perform skits with safety

lessons in schools, retirement homes and other venues. The group emphasizes the importance of a home escape plan, staying low to avoid heat and smoke, convening at a meeting place away from the fire, never returning to a burning building and the importance of working, up-to-date smoke alarms.

“How do you know kids are retaining this information? Give teachers a survey. Ask them to give us their honest opinion of the program and help us change it to what it needs to be,” said Caitlin Young, Camden’s assistant city manager, during the city’s Achievement Award presentation.

At least one family has been helped. A 13-year-old girl was home with her brother and an 83-year-old relative, when the stove ignited a pan of grease. The teen got everyone out of the home and to a central meeting place, actions she said she learned from the clowns who visited her school.

Want to learn more? On October 25, the Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Fall Session will offer the course, “Public Safety Policy and Administration,” focusing on police, fire and municipal court policies, best practices and operations. For more information, go to www.masc.sc (keyword: advanced MEO).



(above) Rep. Joe Daning (far right) participated in a 2017 HLAB panel discussion. (right) Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols welcomed tourists from across the world for the UCI BMX World Championships. Photo: Rock Hill.



Get involved, award winners urge

Doug Echols was a teenager looking for leadership opportunities when he first became interested in local government.

“There is tremendous reward when young people choose engagement over sitting on the sidelines,” said Echols, the mayor of Rock Hill since 1998 and a councilmember for two terms before becoming mayor.

“There are personal benefits and the contributions to society,” added Echols. “It does not have to be an elected position, but we certainly need those who seek the

common good involved in community life and those who realize the value they can add to building their community.”

At the Municipal Association of South Carolina’s Annual Meeting, Echols received the Allison Farlow award, the organization’s highest honor awarded to municipal officials. Rep. Joe Daning, (R-Goose Creek), received the Municipal Association’s Distinguished Service Award, which honors individuals outside of municipal government who contribute to the advancement of municipal government in South Carolina.

“I am very honored to receive the Farlow Award and to have been supported through the years by so many citizens, professional staff and other elected officials,” said Echols.

Like Echols, Daning also saw the value of local government early in his life. Daning was not quite 30 when he decided to help protect the public’s safety.

“I got interested in the City of Goose Creek in 1970 when I became a member of the volunteer rescue squad,” said Daning, who was elected to City Council in 1978. “The council at that time was not very open, and I thought it should be.”

Daning was the lead sponsor of the Dilapidated Buildings Act in 2015 and 2016 and worked with a bipartisan group of House members in 2016 and 2017 to introduce annexation legislation that would help cities provide services more efficiently. Daning participates regularly in the Association’s Regional Advocacy Meetings and has served on a Hometown Legislative Action Day panel. He also worked with the Municipal Association to support business licensing legislation that would streamline the process for implementing the tax.

“Since he was elected to the House, Representative Daning has always been a champion for our cities and towns as well as a proponent of good local government and local control,” said Walterboro Mayor Bill Young and former president of the Association.

While mayor of Rock Hill, Echols was instrumental in the city’s sports tourism industry boom with the addition of the world-renowned Giordana Velodrome and the Novant Health BMX Supercross Track.

Children have always been his priority, so Echols initiated Rock Hill’s Commission for Children and Youth. He also created the city’s long-range resident-based planning group and the Mayor’s Task Force for Greenways, Trails and Sidewalks.

“While active in so many of the programs of the Association, Mayor Echols was especially passionate about the programs designed to bring awareness to the value of cities and the impact cities have on the state’s economic health,” said Young.

City of Clinton utility employees responded to Hurricane Matthew's aftermath in the City of Bennettsville. Photo: City of Clinton.

The value of municipal power systems

Municipal power systems can offer distinct benefits to cities and their residents — from the power of teamwork after a storm to lower rates to economic development support.

Like local schools, hospitals or parks, municipal power utilities are community-owned, not-for-profit institutions. Both in South Carolina and the United States, approximately 14 percent of electric customers are served by public power.

In South Carolina, 170,000 residential and business customers in 21 cities and towns receive their power from municipal power systems, which range in size from 360 to 37,000 customers. All 21 municipal power systems are members of the South Carolina Association of Municipal Power Systems.

So what makes municipal power systems different?

Local accountability, local investment

In municipalities operating power systems in South Carolina, the voters in the city elect the council or governing board responsible for operating the electric utility. Because of the local nature of municipal power systems, customers get quick responses to issues. And since public power utilities operate under the state's open government laws, customers can bring any opinions or concerns to an open meeting of the municipal council or governing board.

Customers have a direct say in how the operation is run and how rates are set, said Coleman Smoak, the retired general manager of the Laurens Commission of Public Works and current general manager of Piedmont Municipal Power Agency. In fact, for public power utilities,



residents' input helps determine electric rates, investment decisions about new technology, appropriate staffing levels and energy savings initiatives.

"We are self-regulated by our elected commission in terms of rates," said Joel Ledbetter, general manager of Easley Combined Utilities. "We're in business for the people who own us — the people in the city. We are not in business for returns or dividends of stockholders. We're working directly for the owners."

Municipal power systems come with one more public-accountability attribute: Transparency. If customers want to learn more about some aspect of their power provider, the S.C. Freedom of Information Act requires that the system's nonexempt records be open. This level of transparency is unique to municipal power.

Responsiveness is another advantage. "Local linemen and support staff also ensure residents and businesses receive more reliable and responsive service," Ledbetter said. "The crews are located in the City of Easley, so they can quickly respond to service calls, as opposed to investor-owned utilities, where crews may come from another city, county or sometimes state."

The American Public Power Association has found that local public power utilities often support numerous programs in their community, including charitable, education and beautification efforts.

"We're closer to our people," Ledbetter said. "We invest back in the community."

Because most SCAMPS utility-member employees work and live in the city or town they serve, the community benefits from the employees' reinvestment of wages in the local economy.

More than electric

Most municipal power systems in South Carolina provide one or more other utilities such as water, sanitary sewer, or even natural gas, in addition to electric service.

"It's more efficient to integrate utilities and combine engineering staff, equipment, and administrative functions and personnel," said Ledbetter.

Customers benefit from the convenience of receiving a single bill for the combined utility services and making one



payment each billing cycle. A combined municipal utility system also offers the advantage of a one-stop shop, which allows new customers looking to establish service or wanting to ask questions to communicate with a single entity.

Economic development and public power

Local ownership gives the utilities' governing bodies the flexibility to tailor rate and policy decisions to support economic development projects.

"Economic development prospects like working with a combined utility because it streamlines navigating technical and environmental regulations and permitting," said Eric Budds, the Municipal Association's deputy executive director responsible for SCAMPS. "Most municipal power systems work closely with county economic development offices and regional economic development alliances."

Some utilities, such as the City of Clinton's, have built industrial parks that leverage the one-stop shop and service provider concept to enhance economic development recruitment.

Sister cities unite

SCAMPS offers strength in numbers for the 21 municipal electric systems. Collectively, these systems employ approximately 150 linemen and work collectively through SCAMPS, share technical expertise, train

staff and advocate for state and federal policies that support public power. These systems also team up to restore power in response to severe weather events as members of a state, regional and national mutual aid network.

In the wake of Hurricane Irma in September, 66 employees from SCAMPS member utilities volunteered to help restore power in communities impacted by the hurricane. Fifty-nine employees assisted the Jacksonville Energy Authority, while seven employees helped the Georgia cities of Conyers and Sandersville repair their electric systems.

In October of 2016, Hurricane Matthew left 25,000 customer outages in its ferocious wake. Restoring power to the three member cities — Bennettsville, Georgetown, and Orangeburg — was possible because of an intense SCAMPS-led effort to mobilize 140 people representing electrical personnel from Alabama, Florida, North Carolina and Nebraska.

"The Hurricane Matthew response demonstrated the effectiveness of the mutual aid network and the dedication of the SCAMPS linemen, support personnel, and management personnel who mobilized as part of the effort," said Budds.

The American Public Power Association celebrates Public Power Week the first full week in October every year. For more information about the South Carolina Association of Municipal Power Systems, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: SCAMPS).



Training saves lives and money

“Under pressure, we do not rise to the occasion. We fall back on our training — whether good or bad,” said law enforcement leadership expert Jack Enter.

Police departments keep up-to-date policies and procedures, maintain training and adhere to policies in order to protect the lives and well-being of residents and their own law enforcement officers. But there is public money at stake, too. And the same measures that protect law enforcement officers and residents also protect city property and assets.

Since January of 2014, the Municipal Association’s self-insured property and liability insurance program, the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, has incurred \$3.4 million in costs related to automobile liability claims from member police departments. Meanwhile, the Association’s self-insured workers’ compensation insurance program, the SC Municipal Insurance Trust, has incurred nearly \$8.1 million in workers’ compensation claims related to motor vehicle incidents of police department personnel.

So what are police departments doing to reduce claims from automobile accidents and other kinds of incidents that law enforcement officers encounter?

The City of Lancaster includes in its budget usage fees for the police department to conduct precision and high

speed driver training at the Carolina Motor Sports Park between Westville and Kershaw. The facility allows for the professional police training staff to simulate real world scenarios in a controlled environment.

An affordable resource available to any department is Below 100, a nonprofit initiative offering effective training by volunteer officers to reduce line of duty deaths through training on five tenets. Those include rules to always wear a seat-belt while driving and that, “complacency kills.” The only cost for the training is the trainer’s travel expenses.

Improving officers’ safety and proficiency behind the wheel is one of several areas that police departments focus on as a way to improve safety and protect assets.

Many departments strive to offer more than just the required training for their officers. The Town of McCormick provides intense in-house active shooter scenario-based training at Hickory Knob State Park. This is notable for a department with fewer than 10 sworn officers.

The City of Florence offers scenario-based training so officers have experience making decisions in more real world circumstances than can be taught in typical passive classroom setting. The use of simunitions, which is nonlethal training with ammunition like paintballs,

enhances the experience because it closely resembles reality. When an officer experiences the simunitions’ impact, it provides instant, painful feedback reinforcing the need for better tactics and training.

The S.C. Criminal Justice Academy is working with the National Association Alliance on Mental Illness to develop training to prepare officers to de-escalate during encounters with people dealing with mental illness, in accordance with S.C. state law.

For people who are on the autism spectrum or those dealing with a mental health episode, or those who have diminished mental or emotional capacity, their responses may not be what is typically expected.

Officers are trained to recognize and discern behaviors and responses, which may help officers determine whether a resident poses a threat or merely needs help. Part of this training involves techniques to de-escalate a heated confrontation.

“For instance, officers will be trained to avoid trigger phrases, such as ‘calm down,’” said Todd Williams, public safety loss control consultant for the Municipal Association’s Risk Management Services.

See pg. 8 for more about verbal judo and de-escalation techniques and training opportunities.

OSHA can help

As South Carolina cities look for resources and methods to keep employees safe, it's important to identify easily accessible sources of assistance. Establishing safety, health and wellness programs that promote employee engagement and training is essential in reducing injury claims.

Do what's free first

Cities should first designate an employee in a position of authority as the safety coordinator. This individual must have management support to effectively put safety and risk management programs in place. Next, cities should establish a safety committee made up of representatives from all departments and have supervisors conduct regularly scheduled safety meetings with employees.

If a safety incident occurs, supervisors should investigate to determine its causes and to establish remedial measures to prevent recurrence. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring safe conditions, work procedures and housekeeping practices are in place to keep employees safe. Supervisors should take corrective actions to control unsafe acts, conditions and procedures.

The new hire onboarding process is the best time to educate employees on the city's safety program. Each year, the Municipal Association's workers' compensation program, the South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust, reviews trends for the cities participating in the program.

In 2016, most claims were caused by employees with less than three years on the job or by employees ages 18 to 34. In terms of injuries, strains and sprains were the leading causes. Police officers continued to lead in claims frequency and claims cost.

"This trend reinforces the need to make sure employees get off to the right start and receive ongoing training," said Venyke Harley,

loss control manager for the Municipal Association's Risk Management Services.

Consider using OSHA

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration can be a friend to cities. Municipal governments have the extra benefit of available resources from the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, which runs a state-run program approved by OSHA. S.C. OSHA provides free safety training and confidential on-site consulting services to reduce worker injury rates.



Determining what personal protective equipment and other equipment should be used for the job can be challenging. Cities are encouraged to use sample plans written by S.C. OSHA to guide the development of their safety plans. The written plans are designed to help employers identify critical hazards and educate employees.

Lockout/tagout — controlling the release of hazardous energies, such as electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic and chemical, when disabling machinery — continues to be the most frequently cited violation in South Carolina. But it's not the only high-incidence area. Violations of permit-required confined spaces regulations, electrical safety, and trenching and shoring exposures also present safety hazards in cities.

The updated OSHA general industry checklist can help identify safety concerns.

S.C. OSHA's free consultation service provides guidance to employers to establish or improve their safety and health program. The service also offers training

and education for the employer's supervisors and employees. The training program includes the requirements of the OSHA standards and how the enforcement arm of OSHA interprets the regulations.

Don't be afraid to seek help

"The safety and health consultation program is completely separate from inspection and enforcement," said Harley.

"Information about the workplace, plus any unsafe or unhealthy working conditions the consultant uncovers, are typically not reported to the OSHA inspection staff."

OSHA's voluntary programs provide a variety of free training programs and presentations designed to reduce or eliminate safety and health hazards. Training is available to public employers and employees upon request and may take place at the city requesting assistance, if 12 or more city employees plan to participate.

"The obligation for the employer is a commitment to correct in a timely manner all job safety and health hazards that are found during the consultation visit," according to the S.C. OSHA website. "The commitment must be made prior to the visit by the consultant."

"The more knowledge a city has on the safety and health protocols of its operations, the better it can reduce injuries and illnesses and, most importantly, provide a safe and healthy environment for employees," said Harley.

For more information about S.C. OSHA, call 803.896.7665, or visit www.scosha.lronline.com.

Examples of training programs OSHA offers include:

- OSHA Inspection Process
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Lockout/Tagout
- Trenching/Excavation
- Hazard Communication



Vacancy, harsh weather raise risks

Pay attention to vacant buildings, or someone (or something) else might.

That was the case for an insurer in a northeastern state. During an inspection, 10 children were discovered playing soccer on the roof of an abandoned school building.

Not only can vacant structures pose a safety hazard, but they can also be damaged during extreme winter weather. Many insurers limit coverage on unoccupied buildings. So if a building is damaged due to a weather event, coverage may be limited or denied. To limit safety risks, owners should inspect vacant buildings periodically and make sure routine maintenance occurs. Utilities should only be disconnected after careful consideration of all potential risks to the building.

While South Carolina is generally known for its mild winter weather, the state does have extreme winter events. According to the South Carolina State Climatology Office, the lowest recorded temperature ever reported in the state was -19 degrees in Greenville County

on January 21, 1985. The Climatology Office also reported the greatest 24-hour snowfall in the state was 24 inches in Clarendon County on February 10 - 11, 1973. These examples demonstrate that extreme winter weather can occur — even in South Carolina.

Although such harsh conditions are rare, it is important to weatherproof the city's buildings and equipment before an event occurs. Lack of weatherproofing can be expensive.

A member of the Association's property and casualty program, the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, suffered more than \$41,000 in damage to a building when fire sprinklers ruptured during cold temperatures and flooded a three-story building with 200,000 gallons of water. Members of SCMIRF have had numerous claims from frozen pipes bursting in ceilings, causing issues with sinks and toilets and damaging appliances.

To weatherproof buildings from winter weather, take the following steps:

- Identify critical plumbing and mechanical systems that may freeze. Seal any drafts, install insulation or provide a backup heat source to protect those systems from failure.
- Make sure all windows and doors are closed.
- Protect against animal damage from squirrels, mice and other rodents by closing openings in crawl spaces, soffits and attics.
- Install freeze alarms that warn of any loss of heat or freezing conditions in critical buildings.
- Review the city's insurance coverage to determine what may be covered in the event of a winter storm.

To protect against vandalism or any injuries occurring at vacant buildings, installing fencing will limit access, as will periodic police patrols.

For further information on building inspections, including a building inspection checklist, contact Heather Ricard, director of Risk Management Services, 803.933.1258 or hricard@masc.sc.

Beware of burnout

Committing the people, financing and resources to help employees do their jobs safely is critical.

“So instead of letting an unfilled position drop from the city’s budget, understand the importance of hiring the right number of staff members so that other employees don’t suffer burnout due to the burdens of understaffing,” said Meredith Kaiser, loss control consultant for Risk Management Services. “Burnout can lead to injuries.”

Know how things work

Taking the time to understand all of the activities in the city is crucial to workplace safety because it’s easy to focus on just one area. For example, if the city manager was once a planning director, she may have a natural tendency to keep a closer eye on the planning activities in the city.

“For a comprehensive view of operations, leaders should force themselves out of their comfort zone to learn the risk and safety challenges that exist throughout the entire city,” said Heather Ricard, director of the Municipal Association’s Risk Management Services.

Having the mindset that injuries are merely an acceptable cost of doing business and that the city’s insurance provider will take care of it hurts morale and employee performance and results in additional claims costs.

Devoted to safety

Depending on the size of the organization, it may be necessary to hire a risk/safety manager who can devote 100 percent of his time to the program. The Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities has decided to add a full-time risk manager position in its new budget, according to the department’s manager, Warren Harley.

“Given the risk involved in the utility industry, it’s imperative to have someone focused on this area at all times,” he said.

Don’t skimp on safety

During tight fiscal times, it’s easy to cut training resources and funding for

new equipment like personal protective equipment, but strong organizations make funding these items a priority.

“They understand that city employees at any moment can be literally placed in the line of fire as a police officer or called to respond to a fire as a firefighter,” said Ricard.

“Also, always be cognizant of the perils that come along with the duties of utility and public works employees.”

Incentivize

The City of Rock Hill has two safety committees and holds an annual safety banquet every January to recognize their city-wide efforts. All members of the city’s leadership staff attend the luncheon, which draws more than 100 attendees.

Giving employees a tangible reward for promoting safety in the workplace — beyond simply the prospect of avoiding physical risks — can be an effective way to create a safety-focused culture.

“Rewarding employees for identifying hazards and working safely will keep employees engaged and allow them to see the city’s investment in the program,” said Kaiser.

“Safety is one of the city’s core values and at the forefront of nearly all policy and budget decisions — from vehicle purchases to staff training to employee benefits,” said Rock Hill City Manager David Vehaun.

“We try to ensure in every way possible that at the end of each day, city employees get home safe to their families.”

The City of Greer has a strategy of its own.

“Our safety incentive program has been very effective by allowing our employees to tangibly see how safe practices can affect their personal well-being and costs to the organization,” said Ed Driggers, administrator for the City of Greer.

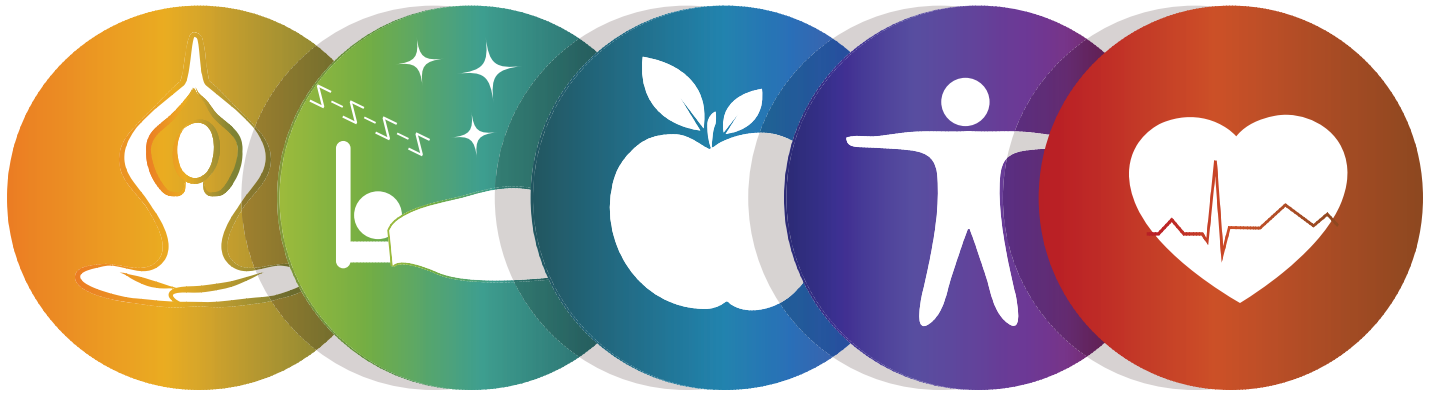
Annually, the city budgets for the full cost for workers’ compensation insurance. Any savings to the city’s coffers realized through safety performance is passed along on a shared basis to all employees and the taxpayers. Half of the

savings is returned to the general fund of the city, and the other half is distributed among all employees. For the last 10 years, the city has hosted an annual safety and awareness breakfast, where employees have received bonus checks from \$150 to \$650 in a given year.

“All employees share equally in maintaining a safe work environment, and we share the rewards equally among all employees,” said Driggers. “It’s paramount that elected officials and administration support risk management within the organization and lead by example. If something is important, we have to demonstrate that it is important — not just talk about it.”

Leadership steps to achieving and sustaining a safe workplace:

- Establish a vision. Set goals and effectively communicate within the organization.
- Own it. Take ownership of the safety culture and allow for assessment of the workplace through accident investigations and inspections.
- Follow the rules. Risk leadership requires management to follow the rules and set clear expectations.
- Hold staff accountable. Ask questions and know what’s happening in the safety/risk management program.
- Show up. Great risk leaders have a visible presence during safety trainings, luncheons and safety events.
- Speak with one voice. Be the champion and communicate safety goals. Communicate the city’s safety efforts, successes and improvement opportunities.
- Allocate resources. People, tools, equipment and time are absolute necessities for safe work environments. Failing to fund these critical areas can cost the city money.



Lowering risk by raising wellness

When local governments keep city employees physically and emotionally healthy, residents and businesses can reap rewards, too. Luckily, cities have countless tools to improve employee wellness.

Wellness programs can attract and retain employees, make a city an employer of choice, foster creativity, enhance employees' performance and decrease burnout, according to Sara Rauch, director of strategy and planning for the Wellness Council of America.

These benefits go beyond the old thinking, which focused mostly on saving health insurance and workers' compensation costs. To be successful, wellness programs must be tailored for each entity.

The Wellness Council of America developed several essential benchmarks, including the following:

- Enlist senior-level support.
- Empower a cohesive team to drive the program.
- Gather city-specific data on wellness needs.
- Make a detailed plan.
- Choose appropriate wellness interventions.

- Create a supportive environment.
- Carefully evaluate outcomes.

Common challenges to employee wellness include poor nutrition, fatigue and stress, all of which impact physical and behavioral health, safety and performance.

A better diet

Approximately 127 million American adults are overweight, and 60 million are obese, which is considered to be more than 30 pounds overweight.

The Peapod Biz Bites Survey suggests that about two out of three employees find eating healthy at work a challenge.

"Cities can support healthy eating by substituting any unhealthy snacks or meals provided by the city with healthier alternatives," said Meredith Kaiser, loss control consultant for the Municipal Association's Risk Management Services.

It's also helpful to remind employees that eating more fruits and vegetables and less saturated fat reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke. It also lowers the risk of getting diabetes and certain cancers, such as cancers of the mouth, throat, lung, esophagus, stomach and colon.

Obesity is associated with more than 30 serious medical conditions. So consider offering all employees access to nutritional counseling, not just those with certain health diagnoses. Free online educational newsletters, such as one from the American Heart Association, can also supplement onsite resources.

When fatigue affects safety

Forty-three percent of U.S. workers believe they are too tired to function safely at work, according to a new National Safety Council report, *Fatigue in the Workplace: Causes and Consequences of Employee Fatigue*, which focused on 2,000 working adults.

The study also found that 97 percent of workers have at least one risk factor for fatigue, such as working late-night or early-morning shift, working long shifts without regular breaks, working more than 50 hours each week, and having long commutes. The NSC revealed that 76 percent of respondents reported feeling tired at work, 53 percent say they are less productive and 44 percent have trouble focusing.

"Impairment stems not just from alcohol and drugs but lack of restorative rest,"

said NSC President and CEO Deborah A.P. Hersman. “Fitness for duty starts with getting a good night’s sleep.”

According to the report, workplace fatigue can be caused by a variety of factors, including work schedules and job demands. NSC says employers must understand the underlying causes of fatigue in order to identify potential sources of safety risks and ultimately implement appropriate countermeasures.

The document points to three levels of fatigue: decreased cognitive performance, microsleeps or nodding off, and increased risk for workplace injuries. The NSC cites one study that found a person who loses two hours of sleep from a normal eight-hour sleep schedule performs similar to someone who has consumed two to three beers.

Gordon Graham, a law enforcement risk management expert, said that even low-risk tasks can become dangerous when employees are fatigued, complacent or distracted.

Long-term sleep deprivation can lead to other complications, including the following:

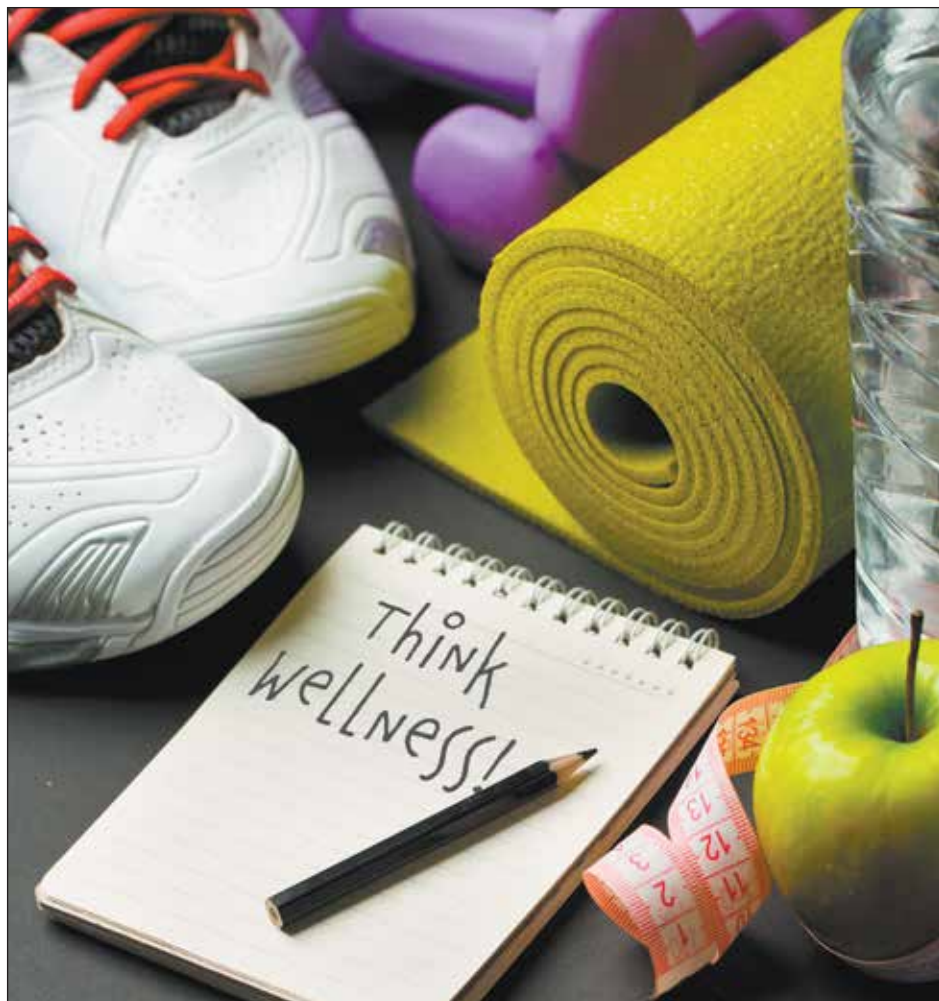
- high blood pressure,
- increased risk of heart disease and diabetes,
- depression,
- substance abuse, and
- obesity.

An estimated 50 million to 70 million Americans struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep, according to the National Institutes of Health. A National Sleep Foundation poll found that American adults sleep less than the recommended seven hours each night, and more than half had symptoms of insomnia at least two nights each week.

Being mindful of work schedules and job demands can support an employee’s quality of sleep, safety and health.

The effects of stress

Workplace Options, a provider of Employee Assistance Program services, examined data representing more than 100,000 employees’ EAP inquiries from 2012 to 2014. While the number of cases dealing with personal emotional health issues remained relatively constant over the



period, those related to stress, anxiety, and depression showed an “alarming” increase.

About four out of every 10 cases were related to personal emotional health issues. The number of cases around depression increased 58 percent between 2012 and 2014. Anxiety cases were up 74 percent and cases of employee stress increased 28 percent.

“If your employees’ emotional well-being wasn’t already on the top of your list of priorities, it needs to be,” said Dean Debnam, CEO of Workplace Options.

Aetna surveyed its employees and found that those who reported the highest levels of stress incurred on average \$2,000 more per year in health care costs.

Cities cannot eliminate the causes of stress in employees’ personal lives. But it is important to try to reduce causes of work-related stress, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

There are some concrete steps that may help to achieve this. Group discussions or employee surveys can help identify sources of stress and possible solutions. Employee Assistance Program providers can be a resource for individual counseling as well as classroom training on topics such as stress-management and conflict resolution. First responders also have a behavioral health benefit established to reimburse them for out-of-pocket costs related to mental health care.

A variety of studies have suggested that mindfulness techniques are an effective way to manage stress. Employees can download an app like Headspace for tips.

For more information, SCMIT and SCMIRF members may contact Meredith Kaiser at 803.933.1279 or mkaiser.masc.sc.

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Calendar

For a complete listing of training opportunities, visit www.masc.sc to view the calendar.

OCTOBER

11 South Carolina Utility Billing Association Fall Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. The topic is “internal” customer-service training, how good interactions between coworkers can lead to good external customer service.

12 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. Topics include blighted property and dilapidated structures, fair housing initiatives and the Town of Bluffton’s strategic planning process.

13 2017 City Managers and Administrators Fall Forum. Columbia Conference Center.

17 – 20 Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association/SC Business Licensing Officials Association Joint Academy. Spartanburg Marriott. MFOCTA topics include fraud prevention; funding capital improvement plans; and short-term rentals and the sharing economy. BLOA topics include code enforcement officers’ role in the regulatory cycle and licensing rental properties. Joint session topics include a legislative report and how to build a plan for economic success.

25 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Fall Session. Marriott Columbia. Courses offered: “Advanced Municipal Economic Development” and “Public Safety Policy and Administration.” (See pg. 4)

NOVEMBER

8 - 10 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Annual Meeting. North Charleston Marriott. Topics include workplace violence, new employee

background checks and the Family and Medical Leave Act.

9 Risk Management Services Annual Members Meeting. Columbia Conference Center.

16 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Fourth Quarter Meeting. Columbia Conference Center. Topics include policy decisions affecting the long-term asset management of a stormwater program, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency update on Region IV, and the Common Enemy rule in state drainage laws.

DECEMBER

1 Municipal Attorneys Association Annual Meeting. Embassy Suites Columbia. Topics include a legislative update, ethics session, economic development incentives, and issuing a zoning or code enforcement citation.