



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seasonal employees perform many job functions within municipal operations. Typically these employees are high school or college age students who are employed for a short period. In many cases, these individuals are employed with Parks and Recreation, Public Works, or school custodial departments. CIRMA has identified a growing trend in the frequency of Workers' Compensation claims involving seasonal employees. The severity of these claims are significant in some cases.

SCENARIO

On his first day of work, a seasonal employee was informed that he would be on landscaping duty and asked by his supervisor if he knew how to operate a weed trimmer, to which he responded that he did. The supervisor brought him to the park where he was to clean the weeds and brush, then told him that would be back in a few hours to check his progress. The supervisor did not provide further instruction. The seasonal employee was trimming grass with the weed trimmer when debris struck his left eye. Unfortunately, he was not wearing eye protection at the time.

The employee did not report the incident to the supervisor until three days later, when his eye injury had not improved. The employee was treated for corneal abrasion, but later developed an infection that required surgery. The employee will have permanent eye impairment. Cost of the claim: \$141,050.

CAUSES OF LOSS

- Employee did not receive job orientation or safety instruction.
- There was no on-site supervision of the work activity.
- Employee was not trained on the hazards of the work and was not provided with the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- The employee's supervisor was not trained in managing seasonal employees. Organizational culture did not consider training seasonal employees a priority or necessary.

LESSONS LEARNED

Because many seasonal employees are inexperienced, unfamiliar with safety precautions, policies, and procedures, and may be tasked with physically demanding jobs, the following risk management best practices should be implemented for all seasonal staff:

- Seasonal staff should be provided with job and safety orientation that includes, at a minimum, applicable OSHA compliance topics, including Personal Protective Equipment, back injury prevention, and any other applicable standards.
- Seasonal employees should have the physical capability to perform the assigned job duties and be provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.
- Seasonal employees should be trained on injury reporting policies and procedures.
- All seasonal employees should be monitored on a regular basis to reinforce safe-work practices.
- A formal Return-to-Work policy should be fully implemented for all seasonal employees.
- Supervisors should be trained on managing seasonal employees.
- Before hire, employment start dates and end dates should be established, then communicated in writing and signed by the employee.
- Safety for all employees (seasonal, part-time, full-time) should be an organizational priority that is directed and supported by leadership.

CIRMA RESOURCES

- *Summer Maintenance Safety Orientation Training Kit*
- *Safety Orientation for Seasonal Employees Training Kit*

The training kits listed above are available through the Vector Solutions portal. For more information, please contact your CIRMA Risk Management Consultant.