

SUMMARY

The Town of Rocky Hill promotes a culture of risk management by facilitating widespread employee engagement and empowering individual employees to make good decisions through robust training programs designed to impact workplace safety and climate. The Town's low claims patterns, in the areas of workers' compensation and public officials'/employment practices liability, have been attributed to initiatives described by CIRMA's underwriting and risk management representatives as model best practices.

For example, with regard to the **Town's Safety Committee**, staff across ranks and departments meet quarterly to discuss safety issues, and shepherd employees to safety training based on CIRMA reports on claims patterns. The Town maintains multiple **Workplace Safety Webpages**, which present guidance related to OSHA Compliance Plans, workers' compensation, and other safety-related matters. Relative to employment practices, live **Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Sessions** include a question-and-answer format to reinforce skills that sustain positive work climates. An entire **Recruitment and Hiring Webpage** is dedicated to best practice guidance for evaluating applicants. As to the timely matter of workplace violence, the Town has embraced the principles of proactive response options presented through the nationally-acclaimed **ALICE program**.

DESCRIPTION

In conjunction with re-establishing its human resources function over the last three years, the Town of Rocky Hill signaled its strong commitment to risk management by implementing multiple, highly visible initiatives. These initiatives were designed with goals to decrease claims in the areas of workers' compensation and public officials'/employment practices liability.

As a testament to the Town's dedication to excellence in risk management, **CIRMA's Stewardship Reports, including reports on claims experience, reflect that the Town maintains some of the lowest rates of loss, and claims filed, when compared to other CIRMA members.**

With regard to workers' compensation claims, the Town's frequency and severity rates are amongst the lowest in relevant comparator groups – an achievement that has been attributed to multiple initiatives which are described below and heralded by CIRMA Underwriters and Risk Managers as model best practices. Ashley Reda, the Town's Underwriter from CIRMA, stated she "believes that Rocky Hill is the 'gold standard' with regard to their operations."

Through its **Safety Committee**, the Town of Rocky Hill develops safety programs that conform to best management practices and incorporates workplace safety awareness into daily work

activities and training – all designed to ultimately reduce the likelihood of employee injury. As a sign of the Town’s commitment, an executive-level advocate was selected to provide strategic management of the Safety Committee, and Co-Chairs were appointed to facilitate quarterly agenda items and activities. The Safety Committee is comprised of a representative body of employees, from a broad cross section of positions and ranks across municipal departments.

Safety Committee employees play active roles in identifying safety issues, and reinforce the importance of *Safety Awareness Training*. Data from CIRMA reports, which describe claims patterns are shared with Safety Committee members and relevant supervisors to ensure that training sessions relate directly to injury patterns or current work activity. Safety Committee members are also encouraged to help broadcast, via email or through word-of-mouth, relevant training opportunities. Additionally, Safety Committee members recently committed to ensuring that their co-workers (at least two co-workers per Committee member) secure safety-related training certificates, with a focus on CIRMA’s free E-Learning platform resource.

The Town of Rocky Hill’s website has become an important tool for employees, providing on-line workplace safety information portals. Through its *Workplace Safety and OSHA Compliance Webpages*, the Town ensures organization-wide access to workplace safety information. These webpages also include the Town’s OSHA Compliance Plans, which were drafted in consultation with Safety Committee representatives from a cross section of work groups and departments, including public works, facilities and custodial management, parks and recreation, and the Rocky Hill Police Department. The Town’s OSHA Compliance Plans include the *Bloodborne Pathogen & Exposure Control Program, Hearing Conservation Program, Lockout-Tagout Program, Emergency Operation Plan, Emergency Evacuation Plan, Hazard Communication Plan, and the Confined Space-Competent Person Compliance Program*.

Through its *Workers’ Compensation Guidance Webpage*, the Town provides easily accessible information to employees and their supervisors relative to workers’ compensation claim intake and documentation. This webpage features a subsection dedicated to instructions, key documents, and links to the Connecticut’s Workers’ Compensation Commission. This webpage points employees and their supervisors to important resources, including the standard **CIRMA Injury Reporting Information** form, which Human Resources staff use to upload information into CIRMA’s on-line **First Report of Injury** form.

The above webpages and information sites are maintained by the Department of Human Resources and Legal Compliance, with staff who are specifically focused on providing guidance and support to employees. Beyond understanding the workplace injury report intake process, staff of this department are particularly trained in proper record-keeping and maintenance of personnel records. The staff includes a Registered Nurse who carefully monitors notes from medical providers, including work restriction and return-to-work memoranda, and is able to

ensure that appropriate information is exchanged with supervisors without violating HIPPA regulations. The department Director is well-versed in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) regulations, thereby ensuring that the Town complies with its legal obligations to assist injured workers.

As with workers' compensation claims, CIRMA claims reports reflect that the Town's public officials' /employment practices liability claims are amongst the lowest compared to other CIRMA members. The Town's relatively conservative number of public officials' liability claims reflects efforts to equip managers and supervisors with information that facilitates good decision-making relative to employment practices and workplace climate matters. Over the course of multiple Senior Staff meetings, Directors and others in key leadership positions participated in a workshop entitled *Preventative Training for Managers/Supervisors*, which focused on issues of sexual and discriminatory harassment, hostile work environment, discrimination and retaliation. Additionally, for those with supervisory responsibilities, on-site sexual harassment prevention training seminars are offered. The aforementioned preventative training is conducted by internal personnel familiar with departmental staff and key principles of prevention relative to sexual harassment and discrimination. The live, on-site training provides information regarding definitions, state and federal regulations, and allows for small-group discussions and real-time feedback on case studies uniquely designed to address matters relevant to Town staff. Additionally, the Town sponsored a customized training session for newly elected municipal officials, with a focus on Ethics and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which was conducted by Stephen Pendl, CIRMA Risk Management Consultant, and Thomas Hennick, Public Education Officer of the Connecticut FOI Commission.

As an added aspect of employment best practices, the Town implemented an **Objective Applicant Selection and Hiring Process** that features redacted application packages and other objective evaluation tools. Relative to permanent position vacancies, hiring managers and search committee members work closely with Human Resources. Hiring Managers identify the most qualified applicants for positions through best practice techniques designed to counter nepotism and illegal bias, which mitigates exposure to unfair hiring practices claims. The Town's website presents informative written resources, such as *Search Process Guidelines*, *Guidelines for Search Committees*, and *Interviewing Best Practices*.

For hiring managers and supervisors, these informative resources offer opportunities to develop and implement modern techniques relative to managing a diverse workforce. The Department of Human Resources and Legal Compliance partners with department Directors relative to implementing best practices in each respective unit. For instance, the Rocky Hill Police Department invited staff of Human Resources and Legal Compliance to conduct a training session on important considerations in the hiring process, which is an element of the Police Department's CALEA accreditation. Hiring managers and supervisors throughout the municipal

organization receive similar training and consultation, all in an effort to ensure a fair and objective hiring process while decreasing exposure to public officials'/employment practices liability claims.

In order to address the modern challenges of violence in the workplace and schools, the Town of Rocky Hill is implementing the ALICE program. ALICE is a research-based program that provides training beyond traditional lockdown, and empowers individuals with knowledge to make decisions that increase the odds of surviving a violent incident. The Town of Rocky Hill is implementing the ALICE *Blended Learning* delivery model, which partners subject matter experts from law enforcement with municipal and public school administrators who are ALICE-certified instructors.

In 2016, Safety Committee members expressed an interest in an updated training program that would reflect contemporary lessons on addressing workplace violence. In 2017, Rocky Hill Police Department Lieutenant Joseph Phelps and Sergeant Steven Morgan engaged in intensive research and training designed to identify effective, modern techniques to combat violent incidents in the workplace and schools. Contemporary lessons point to the necessity of teaching individual administrators, employees and students how to stay safe—and the ALICE program has been identified by federal authorities and many state governments as a best practice program.

As subject matter experts, Lt. Phelps and Sgt. Morgan introduced key principles of ALICE to senior leaders of both the Town and Public Schools, and even expanded their audiences to local businesses. In August of 2018, an expansive train-the-trainer seminar, led by an ALICE Institute representative and Lt. Phelps, ensured that this knowledge base was shared with dozens of additional municipal and school administrators, to achieve widespread awareness of community safety and risk mitigation. ALICE training sessions are planned for the fall of 2018 and beyond, and will be offered to municipal employees, school teachers and staff, with additional age-appropriate lessons for students. Nationally, cities and towns work towards institution-wide ALICE Organization Certification, which meets federal guidelines and complies with the OSHA General Duty Clause.

The Town of Rocky Hill will continue to leverage the talents and dedication of its employees and resources of CIRMA and other strategic partners to strive for excellence in risk management programs.