

# IPRF ISSUES

Risk & Safety Tips from the ILLINOIS PUBLIC RISK FUND

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## BUILDING A Safety Culture

The Illinois Public Risk Fund helps protect its members from accidents and injuries. One way to do that is by doing preventative work—helping member organizations develop a culture of safety for their employees. Stressing the importance of safety regularly is a great way to keep the topic fresh in the minds of everyone in the organization. Thinking about safety should lead to more safe behaviors that decrease on-the-job accidents and injuries.

To help members develop and affirm a safety culture, the Illinois Public Risk Fund offers interactive, online training resources to members at no charge. IPRF members can use these courses as part of their safety culture programs. One member who utilizes these courses extensively is the Pleasantview Fire Protection District, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago.

“We follow the safety rules here, and these online programs are good reminders about what we should be doing to keep safety top of mind,” said Battalion Chief Mike Grazian of Pleasantview FPD. “What makes this program work well is the easy online access and go at your own pace.”

Pleasantview FPD implemented the IPRF courses about two years ago as part of its regular training. Employees typically need to complete a course a month. The courses can be about a variety of health and safety topics including slips, trips and falls prevention and hazardous materials management. Employees can complete the courses when it is most convenient for them, accessing them through the IPRF website. All persons get their own account and log-in information. Courses usually take about an hour to complete and include written and audio content. Employees at Pleasantview typically have about two weeks to complete each monthly course. Pleasantview FPD has made completing the courses a required part of the job and an integral part of their safety culture.



Pleasantview firefighters access Summit training as a regular part of their ongoing health and safety training.

“We kind of joke about it each month, saying ‘Have you completed your training yet?’ but the courses are great reminders about safety, and I haven’t heard one complaint about using the IPRF system,” said Grazian. “The content is at the right learning level for our crew, and the IPRF program is definitely the best of the ones we have tried in the last few years.”

Captain Kevin Mulligan is training staff at Pleasantview FPD, who helps put together the safety program each month for the organization. IPRF offers a variety of topics from which to choose. Employees tasked to complete the training need to take a quiz at the end to pass the training. If they get questions wrong, the training program returns the users to the relevant content for review. The goal is to ensure everyone is aware of the importance of safety and knows the best ways to limit workplace accidents.

Pleasantview FPD also uses the courses to help crew members meet their National Fire Protection Agency training requirements. The IPRF program makes it easier to complete the necessary training hours said Grazian.

The Summit training program allows you to manage over 100 programs for your own safety records as well as assign courses for your employees. Reporting of record keeping is done in-house by your designated supervisor. This is a free service to all IPRF members.

Summit online training is available to all members of the Illinois Public Risk Fund program. Access is through the Loss Control training section of the website, [www.iprf.com](http://www.iprf.com). Use your member number as the User ID and ‘iprf’ as the password, same as signing on to the Loss Control section.

If you have questions, please ask your Loss Control Representative for assistance.

### Inside this issue...

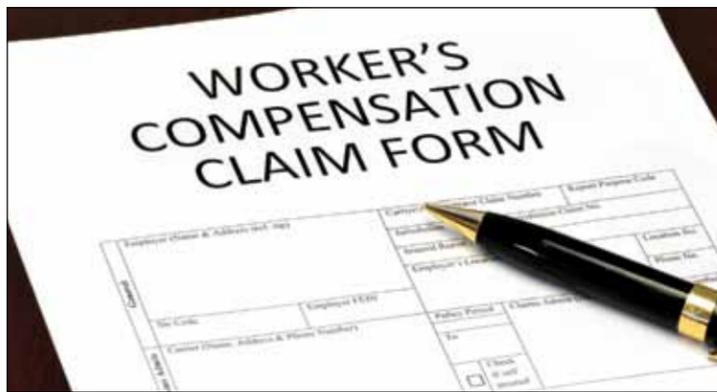
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# News from the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission

The Commission is now almost fully staffed. The Governor appointed one new public Commissioner, Michael Brennan. However, he has not appointed a second public Commissioner to fill the last open position at the Commission. This position has been open for almost a year now. Therefore, Commissioner Brennan is serving double duty and hearing appeals on both panels B and C of the Commission. However, on occasion Chairman Latz has filled on and heard cases before Panel C.

Regrettably, and suddenly, Arbitrator Douglas Holland recently died at age 56. Arbitrator Holland was first appointed as a Commissioner in 1986 and then as a downstate arbitrator in 1989. He handled cases primarily in Rockford and Central Illinois. He was a dedicated hearing officer and did his best to work with the parties to resolve claims fairly and without litigation.



## DOWNSTATE ASSIGNMENTS

The statutory changes made in 2011 require downstate arbitrators to move every two years. This means that all of the downstate arbitration assignments have been modified effective January 1, 2014. Here is a list of the downstate zones and the three arbitrators that will serve in the downstate zones.

**Zone 1 – Collinsville, Herrin, Mt. Vernon – Arbitrators Nancy Lindsay, Brandon Zanotti, Edward Lee**

**Zone 2 – Urbana, Springfield, Quincy – Arbitrators Molly Dearing, Maureen Pulia, William Gallagher**

**Zone 3 – Bloomington, Peoria, Rock Island – Arbitrators Anthony Erbacci, Gregory Dollison, Doug McCarthy**

**Zone 4 – New Lenox, Geneva, Ottawa – Arbitrators Gerald Granada, Peter O'Malley, Stephen Mathis**

**Zone 5 – Rockford, Waukegan, Woodstock – Arbitrators JoAnn Fratianni, Robert Falcioni, George Andros**

**Zone 6 – Wheaton (Chicago) – Arbitrators Carol Doherty, Joshua Luskin, Brian Cronin**

The assignments will require significant travel for several of these arbitrators.

## CHICAGO ASSIGNMENTS

As a result of the addition of new arbitrators in Chicago, cases before various arbitrators in Chicago have been reshuffled. The number of Chicago arbitrators has increased from 11 to 14. The new roster of Chicago arbitrators effective January 1, 2014 is as follows: Arbitrators - Joshua Luskin, Svetlana Kelmanson, Barbara Flores, Brian Cronin, Kurt Carlson, Ketki Steffen, Jeffrey Huebsch, Robert Williams, Lynette Thompson-Smith, Deborah Simpson, David Kane, Molly Mason, Carolyn Doherty and Milton Black.

The Commission has also altered the timing of the status calls and trial dates. All trial dates for the January trial call will now occur during the month of January. However, since the status call dates for the arbitrators are staggered, the gap between an arbitrator's status call date and his first trial date could be as long as three weeks or as short as three days. As a result of this change, seven arbitrators will be assigned hearing dates in the first half of every month and six arbitrators will be assigned hearing dates in the second half of every month. This change is an unusual one and is being tried out for the first time at the Commission. It remains to be seen whether it is a good idea. It is more helpful in arranging witnesses to have at least seven days between the trial call date and the first trial date in the cycle.

The new hearing officers will present new challenges and opportunities as we litigate future cases.

*Michael E. Rusin, Rusin Maciorowski & Friedman, Ltd.*

## WWII Vets Return Home to Heroes' Welcome



### The Honor Flight program was established to honor remaining World War II Veterans.

Honor Flight organizes and finances a trip for WWII Veterans to fly to Washington DC and spend the day at the World War II Memorial and be honored for their service to our Country. The Honor Flight program is made possible because of hundreds of volunteers, and charitable contributions.

One element of the program is the welcome home ceremony as the World War II Veterans return home to Chicago. They are welcomed by several hundred cheering people, people traveling in the airport stop to join in on the celebration, and a band is on hand to play patriotic songs. One of our own is a member of the band, IPRF Loss Control Consultant Ted Golden plays in the welcome band (he is located to the left of the conductor). Ted describes the experience as "extremely powerful and emotional, it is so satisfying to see the gratitude in the Veterans faces".

**Our thanks to Ted for his contribution to honoring our World War II Veterans.**



### AVERAGE & MAXIMUM WEEKLY Disability Benefits

The maximum TTD benefit can be no more than 133-1/3% of the statewide average weekly wage on the date of the injury or last exposure.

	STATE AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE	MAXIMUM TTD BENEFIT
July 15, 2013 to Jan. 14, 2014	\$998.40	\$1,331.20
Jan. 15, 2013 to July 14, 2013	\$990.02	\$1,320.03
July 15, 2012 to Jan. 14, 2013	\$971.60	\$1,295.47
Jan. 15, 2012 to July 14, 2012	\$966.72	\$1,288.96



## Snow **Shoveling** Safety

Shoveling snow is very hard work. It can cause muscle strains and back injuries, especially if you do not lift properly. It can also put severe stress on your heart and may even result in a heart attack. Shoveling snow, especially if the snow is wet, is like picking up heavy weights. One full shovel load of wet snow can weigh as much as 25 pounds.

### **Be heart healthy and avoid back injuries this winter by following these shoveling safety tips:**

- Before you start shoveling, move and stretch your muscles to warm them up.
- Layer your clothing to keep muscles warm and flexible.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine before beginning to shovel. These are stimulants, which may increase your heart rate and cause your blood vessels to constrict. This places extra stress on the heart.
- Use a shovel with a handle that is long enough to let you keep your back just about straight when lifting. An ergonomic shovel with a bent handle is better than one with a straight handle.
- Take it slow. Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically.
- Drink plenty of water. Dehydration is just as big of an issue in cold winter months as it is in the summer.
- Push the snow whenever possible rather than lifting it.
- Lift smaller loads of snow. Don't overload your shovel.
- Lift with your legs bent and your back as straight as possible, so you are lifting with your legs rather than your back.
- Step in the direction you are throwing the snow. This will help to avoid twisting your lower back. Do not toss snow over your shoulder or to the side.
- Take frequent breaks. To reverse the excessive bending and extend your back, stand straight and walk around. Place your hands toward the back of your hips and bend backward slightly for several seconds.
- Most importantly listen to your body. Don't shovel to the point of exhaustion. If you are out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately.

## Meet Carol Biagi *Medical Only Representative*



Carol Biagi joined IPRF in April 2009 as a Claims Clerk.

She has over 30 years of customer service experience. After working for eight years as a supervisor for car dealerships, she was well prepared for the insurance industry.

Her hard work and determination helped Carol advance to a Medical Only Representative.

She loves the busy challenges and personal contact with the Members that she serves.

Carol is very appreciative of her co-workers for their strength and support. She says she has a lot to learn and has good teachers.

Attending her first seminar in December, she was moved by the first award given to a female Firearms Administrator.

Her hobbies include 5k's and following Cover Bands. Carol has one son, who plans to be married next year.

## How Can We Better Serve You

The IPRF is dedicated to its members and is always working toward higher levels of service. We need your input on:

- Safety Concerns
- Claims Information
- Timeliness of Claims Processing
- Helpfulness & Courtesy of our Claims Team
- Loss Control
- Topics to be addressed in this newsletter

**Please contact Paul Boecker III at [pboecker@ccmsi.com](mailto:pboecker@ccmsi.com) or 630-649-6053.**

“I have to  
hang up now.  
I'm crashing!”

Remember there's a very good reason to comply with the Cellphone Ban beginning January 1, 2014... YOU!



# How to walk on ICE & SNOW



## Walk like a penguin!

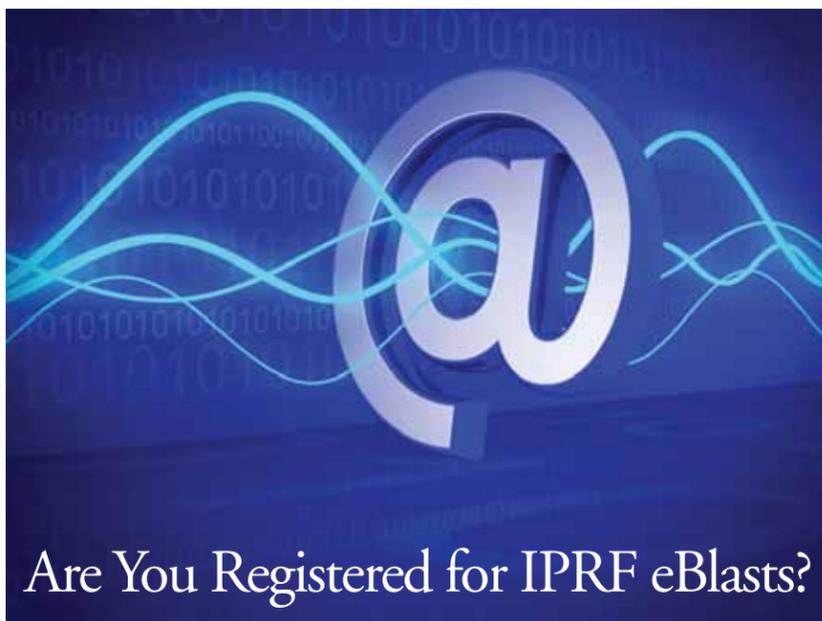
**Keep your feet pointed out slightly to increase your center of gravity.**

**Extend your arms to your sides for better balance.**

**Walk flat-footed with knees 'loose'.**

**Go slowly. Allow yourself extra time to get to your destination so you don't have to hurry.**

**Use extra care when entering or exiting vehicles. With only one foot on the ground you have only half the traction.**



## Are You Registered for IPRF eBlasts?

The IPRF Loss Control team sends periodic eBlast emails to our members. The purpose of the information is to raise levels of safety awareness and promote available training resources, to reduce employee injuries within the program.

**If you are not currently receiving these eBlasts, you are missing:**

- **Monthly Risk Reminders**
- **Safety News**
- **Available Safety Service Offerings**
- **A featured Monthly On-line Safety Training Course**

To register to receive our eBlasts, you can sign up by visiting [www.iprf.com](http://www.iprf.com) and clicking on the banner "Sign Me Up for eBlasts!" or by visiting the Loss Control page and clicking on the button on the right to sign up. After filling out your e-mail address, first and last name, and department, you'll be added to our email list.

This is a free service for IPRF members. IPRF keeps your information confidential and it is not shared with any 3rd parties.

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