

SHARE

NOV/DEC 2024 ISSUE #39

SAFETY HEALTH AND RISK E-CONNECT NEWSLETTER



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Cover photo by Jennifer E. Wolf. A construction crew turns a small parking lot into a colorful new outdoor dining area in Athens, GA.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of LGRMS, ACCG, or GMA.



3500 Parkway Lane, Suite 110 Peachtree Corners, GA 30092

lgrms.com (







UPCOMING WEBINARS AND TRAINING

Lithium-ion Battery Fire Safety and Prevention

WEBINAR | Jan. 28 - 2:00PM-3:00PM An interactive presentation on the proper use and storage of lithium-ion batteries in devices such as smart phones, smoke alarms, etc.

FROM THE YOUTUBE ARCHIVES

Responding to a Use of Force Incident

Jan. 24, 2024

Mitigating Water and Freeze Losses

Nov. 7, 2023

Standards for Employee Drug Testing

April 23, 2023 WATCH NOW

Events subject to change. Check website for updates.

<u>lgrms.com/training-event-calendar</u>





Welcome to the November/December combined edition of SHARE, the monthly publication of Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS). SHARE is sent to all GIRMA/IRMA, and WC, members 10 times per year SHARE has two sections: (1) a general safety, risk, section, and (2) a worker safety-focused section. We cover those topics and issues most relevant to Local Governments in Georgia, plus some new features. We look forward to your feedback. The LGRMS SHARE is published on or around the 20th of each month. If you are not currently on the distribution list to receive our monthly newsletter, it can be downloaded for free from the LGRMS website (www.lgrms.com).

In this issue, we have a variety of articles focusing on current topics affecting local governments. Workers and worker safety is always our number one focus. This month we have tripled up on our Safety Theme to get you started on thinking about the new year. We focus on office and workplace hazards, taking a proactive view of safety, and being aware of foreign hazard debris prevention. On the personnel side we are reprinting an E-Alert sent out by the law firm of Elarbee Thompson, detailing where a "Federal Court Strikes Down DOL's 2024 Overtime Rule, Including Already-Implemented Salary." LGRMS Director Dan Beck discusses in a short article some reasons on why we should care about safety and risk management.

Finally, Georgia Department of Transportation has published their Traffic Operations and Fatality statistics. This is a great series of statistics to use to review with your driver/operators in your fleet.

Our next SHARE will be published in January. From the staff of Local Government Risk Management Services, we wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a great New Year. For questions or issues on training, or any other services provided by LGRMS, contact me at dwatts@lgrms.com.

Be safe.

Dennis

SHARE Contact: Dennis Watts, dwatts@lgrms.com



Why do we care about safety and risk management? Why invest your time in resources in managing safety and risk issues? There are many reasons why you should care about and manage safety and risk.

1. Reputation

Many people don't think of this, but damage to a city's/county's reputation may be the biggest reason to invest your time in managing safety and risk. Look at the following headlines:

- · County Sued for Inmate Death
- City Worker Shot and Killed
- Two Dead After Struck by County Vehicle
- Mayor and Police Officer Sued Over Girl's Suicide
- Elected Official Resigns, Is Sued After E-mailing Racist Game

All these are real headlines (with names and locations removed). Imagine a family considering moving to your community or a business thinking about relocating to your area. What impact would these headlines have on their relocation decision?

2. Regulatory Compliance

Although OSHA doesn't have authority over local governments in Georgia, the EPA and many other

state and federal agencies have oversight over your operations.

3. Claims Costs / Insurance Premiums

Everyone is aware of the ever-rising cost of insurance, but did you know that experts believe for every dollar spent on claims, you may be losing 2 to 3 times that in loss of productivity?

4. Moral Issues

No one wants to see someone get hurt. Everyone has the right to leave work in the same condition as when they arrived at work. These are both great statements, but what really motivates me is the family explanation.

Have you every had to sit down with family members and tell them their loved one is not coming home because of a work-related incident? Please take a moment and think about how that would feel. Imagine the pain and suffering as you explain to that family that their loved one is not coming home. Now imagine having that same conversation, and you as a leader could have done something to prevent the incident. As a leader, you could have implemented a policy, or provided quality training, or held other employees accountable for not following that same safe work practice. That is what motivates me on a daily basis.

Contact: Dan Beck, dbeck@lgrms.com



FIREFIGHTER CANCER

LGRMS partnered with Lt. David Bullard, Past -GSFA President and NVFC State Director, and Chief David E. Eddins, President of Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs, to develop the 2025 Firefighter Cancer Awareness Action Plan. Our focus this year will be to continue build basic awareness of the hazards and controls of firefighter cancer. We produced an online interactive training called "Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service," working with GPSTC to place the training on their learning management system.

LGRMS, working in conjunction with ACCG and GMA, wants to encourage the awareness of the hazards and controls surrounding firefighter cancer across the State of Georgia. Thus, we will award two fire departments (1 County, 1 City) up to \$5,000 in reimbursement, toward the purchase of equipment that will assist in the reduction of firefighter cancer risks (e.g. washer extractor, ventilation equipment, decontamination, etc.).

DOWNLOAD THE BROCHURE

Please use the following link to access the 2025 Firefighter Cancer Awareness Incentive Brochure for more details on this year's program and how you could receive the \$5,000 reimbursement.

https://www.lgrms.com/LGRMS/media/Files/2025-Firefighter-Cancer-Awareness-Brochure-Dist.pdf





Here is an update on traffic deaths in Georgia in 2024 from the Georgia Department of Transportation. This is a great series of statistics to use to review with your driver/operators in your fleet.



Georgia Traffic Deaths - Yearly Total and Comparison GDOT Office of Traffic Operations Fatalities as of 11/26/2024

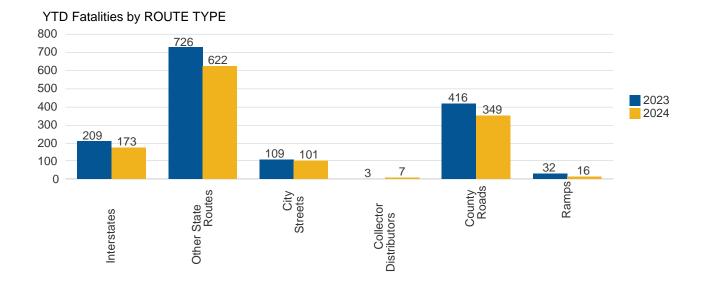
ROUTE TYPE

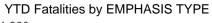
Fatality Details	TO	OTAL ANNUAL		JAL	YEAR TO DATE		YTD CHANGE	
Fatality Type	2022	2023	Difference	Percent	2023	2024	Difference	Percent
Interstates	235	227	-8	-3	209	173	-36	-17
Collector Distributors	8	6	-2	-25	3	7	4	133
Ramps	50	39	-11	-22	32	16	-16	-50
Other State Routes	894	817	-77	-9	726	622	-104	-14
County Roads	515	456	-59	-11	416	349	-67	-16
City Streets	119	121	2	2	109	101	-8	-7
Grand Total	1821	1666	-155	-9	1495	1268	-227	-15

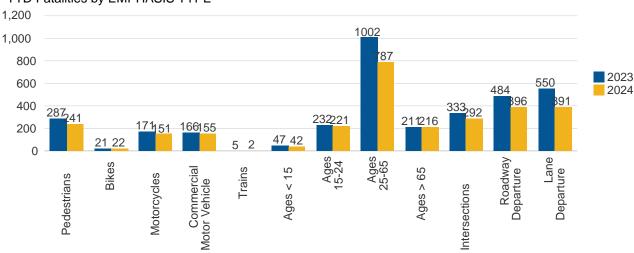
YTD Fatalities by EMPHASIS TYPE

Fatality Details	TOTAL		ANNUAL		YEAR TO DATE		YTD CHANGE	
Fatality Type	2022	2023	Difference	Percent	2023	2024	Difference	Percent
Pedestrians	343	323	-20	-6	288	241	-47	-16
Bikes	33	24	-9	-27	21	22	1	5
Motorcycles	200	182	-18	-9	171	151	-20	-12
Commercial Motor Vehicle	217	184	-33	-15	166	155	-11	-7
Trains	2	5	3	150	5	2	-3	-60
Ages < 15	57	52	-5	-9	47	42	-5	-11
Ages 15-24	273	260	-13	-5	234	221	-13	-6
Ages 25-65	1212	1109	-103	-8	1003	787	-216	-22
Ages > 65	272	241	-31	-11	211	216	5	2
Intersections	369	376	7	2	333	292	-41	-12
Roadway Departure	651	541	-110	-17	484	396	-88	-18
Lane Departure	710	616	-94	-13	551	391	-160	-29
Seat Belt (No/Unknown)	771	697	-74	-10	634	506	-128	-20

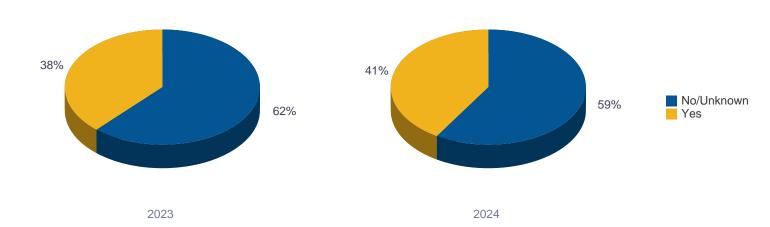
Note: Any single fatality may fall into one or more Emphasis Types.







YTD Seat Belt Fatalities



Source: Georgia Department of Transportation, 11/26/2024



Don't Underestimate Office Hazards

We often think that our public safety and public works folks have the most hazardous jobs in our cities and counties. Most people think that working in an office is a pretty safe and easy job, but look around. There are existing hazards and potential accidents just waiting to happen!

As a person who has worked both in the field and in offices, I think back to several things that I did or observed that could have resulted in injury. One office had an old filing cabinet; whenever you opened the bottom drawer, the top one opened too. If not careful, a busted head would be the result when one stood up. Or having a file cabinet tip over on me because it was top heavy. Staff not using the correct posture when lifting heavy boxes, or retrieving that four-inch-thick, fifteen-pound digest from an overhead shelf in the records room (while standing on a swivel chair). I've seen coworkers trip over a low file drawer that got left out, and trip over electrical cords strewn about the floor. Poorly maintained carpets or uneven floors can cause trips and falls as well.

There are some easy steps that your office workers can do which do not require a lot of extra time to keep our office environment safe. All employees should report any potential or existing hazards to their supervisor—whether it's a slippery floor, too-dark area, or electrical problem—in order for it to be taken care of before someone gets hurt. They should also take responsibility and if they drop it, pick it up; if they spill it, clean it up; if they take it out, put it back; if it's full, empty it.



By Dennis Watts Training, Communication, and Public Safety Risk Manager

With your office coworkers, read through the following page of inspection points and questions on office safety. Identify hazards in your office. Try having an office meeting and discuss some of the concerns. Develop a list of six to twelve safety rules for your office, and encourage all to follow them.

We all need to pitch in and keep our workspace clean, neat, and safe for our fellow workers!

OFFICE SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please review and implement these recommended corrective actions to prevent workplace hazards.

- Are file cabinets top heavy or overloaded?
- Are boxes, papers, and books stored safely on top of files?
- Are lights turned on in dark work areas?
- Are file cabinet or desk drawers left open?
- Are there signs to watch your step at elevators?
- Are spills cleaned up promptly?
- Do you see people standing on their chairs or desktops to reach something high, rather than use a step stool?
- Do electric cords stretch across floor?
- Are power strips used correctly?
- Are fire exits clearly marked, and are employees familiar with them?
- Is there enough space under desk or workstation for employee to take cover in an emergency?
- Are fire drills conducted regularly?
- Are coffee makers, griddles, or heating elements placed in a safe location and inspected regularly?
- Are storage areas clean and neat?
- Are handrails and stairways well lit?
- Does your office have a good housekeeping program?
- Is the floor or carpet in bad condition? Uneven floors can be fall hazards.
- Do people leave wastebaskets or boxes in walkways?
- Do you see persons wearing dangling jewelry or floppy clothing while running a shredder?









Photos: Canva



Prevent Foreign Object Debris

Foreign object debris (FOD) is serious business at airports, and can cause damage that costs airlines, airports, and airport tenants millions of dollars every year. FOD is any object that does not belong in or near airplanes and, as a result, can injure airport or airline personnel and damage airplanes.

Local governments have their own FOD problems. If we do grounds maintenance or right-of-way mowing, we also have to be concerned with FOD. Any object in an inappropriate location which, as a result of being in that location, can damage equipment or injure our employees or citizens or their property is a hazard. Local governments can reduce the hazard by taking steps to prevent these type of incidents.

FOD includes a wide range of material, including loose hardware, broken pavement fragments, trash, hazardous materials, building materials, rocks, metal, road debris, and partially buried hazards as shown in our poster this month. All could potentially injure someone or cause damage to equipment or facilities.

Exercise

Discuss scenarios your crews may have encountered or use the scenarios below and discuss prevention. Discuss

other incidents you or your crews may have experienced.

Mowing Right of Way

A tractor and mower cutting the right of way hits a piece of hidden road debris, throwing it from the mower and hitting a passing vehicle, causing damage to the windshield.

Mowing a Recreational Athletic Field

The mower blade hits the partially buried pipe, as in the poster, causing damage to the mower or throwing pieces out, with the potential for hitting and injuring a citizen or fellow employee.

Prevention

- Conduct a walk-through inspection for high grass areas prior to cutting.
- Never operate a mower in areas where you cannot see the ground without inspecting first.
- Ensure all guards (chains, flaps, etc.) are in place and serviceable.
- Stop mowing when pedestrians or motor vehicles pass nearby.
- Always be alert and wear personal protective equipment (eye, hearing, head, seatbelts).
- Ensure operators are trained.



FEDERAL COURT STRIKES DOWN DOL'S 2024 OVERTIME RULE

Including Already-Implemented Salary Increases for White Collar Exemptions

By Elarbee Thompson Sapp & Wilson, LLP

On November 15, 2024, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas vacated the Department of Labor's (DOL) 2024 Final Rule that modified the salary threshold for "white collar" overtime exemptions under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). That Rule called for increases to the salary threshold in stages – on July 1, 2024; January 1, 2025; and every three years thereafter. The court's order has nationwide effect and invalidates all aspects of the Rule, including the July 2024 increase that many employers have already implemented.

Immediate Impact for Employers:

- The July 2024 increase to \$844 per week (\$43,888 annually) is no longer legally required; as such, the minimum salary threshold for the "white collar" exemptions reverts to \$684 per week (\$35,568 annually) the level in effect immediately prior to the 2024 Rule. The "highly compensated employee" salary level also reverts to the previous level.
- The planned January 2025 increase to \$1,128 per week (\$58,656 annually) will not take effect unless or until the court's decision is reversed or modified on appeal.
- The automatic increases set to begin in 2027 are eliminated unless or until the court's decision is reversed or modified on appeal.

Considerations for July 2024 Changes Already Made:

• Although the \$844/week threshold is no longer legally required, employers who have already raised salaries

to meet this threshold should carefully consider the employee relations impact of making any reductions now. Similarly, employers who reclassified previously exempt employees to non-exempt status should carefully weigh whether to return them to exempt status.

• State laws may restrict the ability of employers to reduce salary increases already implemented (particularly for state and local government employers).

Considerations for Planned January 2025 Implementation:

- Employers can suspend preparations for the planned increase to \$1,128/week on January 1, 2025, but should remain mindful of the possibility that the court's decision could be reversed or modified.
- Review exempt job classifications to ensure the duties tests for exempt status are being met.
- Consider state law requirements which may impose different or higher standards.

Please contact your Elarbee Thompson attorney for specific guidance on how this development affects your organization and to discuss compliance strategies.

This Alert is provided for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as legal advice. Every situation requires individualized analysis by qualified legal counsel. Take a moment to exercise your brain and relieve stress by solving these fun safety puzzles! Answers on page 16.

HIDDEN MESSAGE

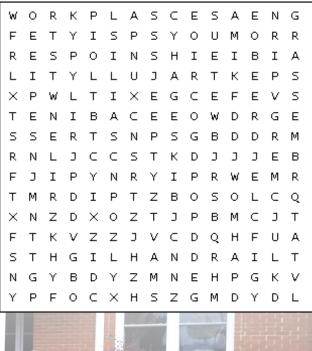
This puzzle is a word search puzzle that has a hidden message in it.

First find all the words in the list. Words can go in any direction and share letters as well as cross over each other.

CABINET GRASS OBJECT
CORDS HANDRAIL SHREDDER
EMERGENCY INSPECTION SPILL
EXIT LIGHTS STRESS

Once you find all the words. Copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.









IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY

With rules, we sometimes forget that safety is primarily a personal responsibility.



By Dennis Watts Training, Communication, and Public Safety Risk Manager

Many local governments have safety rules, department policies, job procedures, and safety regulations. These are in place to help protect workers from harm. With rules, we sometimes forget that safety is primarily a personal responsibility. Workplaces can be covered with warning signs, safety posters, and bulletin boards. Safeguards can be installed on each piece of equipment. We can attend training sessions and be told of safe ways to do work, but none of these things can ensure freedom from accidents unless we want to prevent them. It's up to us!

Unless we realize that our own actions determine whether accidents happen – and until we accept responsibility for these actions – injuries will occur.

Who operates tools and equipment? Who controls how we do a particular job? The answer, of course, is "We do."

Being Accountable

Machines do not reach out and bite. Tripping hazards don't grab a person's feet. Hand tools don't slice and

jab into flesh by themselves. Yet, judging from the statements people use to describe their injuries, one would think that the tools and equipment they use were alive.

People who make such statements are not fully aware that they are accountable for their own actions and must accept the responsibility for them. Little can be done to prevent accidents and injuries until individuals accept this responsibility. When we follow good workplace practices and safety rules, many accidents can be prevented. And when each individual employee brings an acceptance of personal responsibility and accountability into the workplace every day, everyone's risk of injury drops dramatically.

Consider a driver of one of our larger vehicles who jumps down to the ground from the cab, spraining an ankle in the process.

What caused this accident? An irresponsible individual would lay the blame on the vehicle, or say, "I always dismount my vehicle this way." A person who accepts

responsibility would acknowledge this was improper.

Bad luck, other people, inadequate tools, and unfavorable conditions are just a few of the favorite reasons people use to absolve themselves of personal accountability when things go wrong.

Accepting responsibility for our actions is a sign of maturity. It means we believe firmly that it's up to us to do everything we can to prevent accidents. No one else can accept our safety responsibility for us.

Ask yourself this question: "Who is responsible for your safety"? If you are not sure, just look in the mirror.



Just like when you're behind the wheel of a vehicle, there is only one person responsible for ensuring your safety on the job: You.



TEAMWORK

Is a word that we know well. A cooperative effort, Excellence in Policing is a certification program whose goal is to strengthen departments, teams, and policies. It also helps reduce law enforcement liability through Local Government Risk Management Service (LGRMS). Program benefits include:

- **☆** Operational Excellence
- Risk Reduction & Cost Savings
- **Statewide Recognition**

Learn More

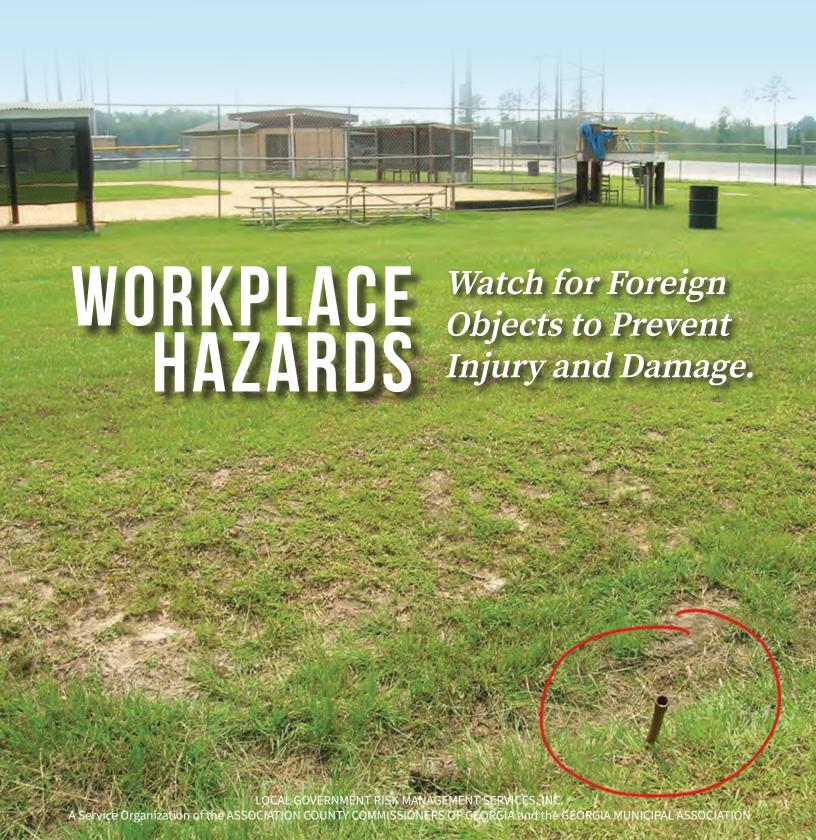
gacities.com/excellence-in-policing





SAFETY THEME POSTER

NOV/DEC 2024 ISSUE #39





HOW TO USE THE MONTHLY SAFETY THEME

Here are some hints to help you get the safety message across to all employees each month.

Theme Poster

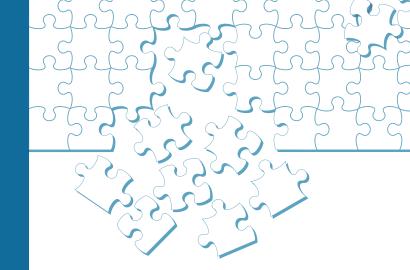
Make copies and post wherever you will get the most impact or email to your departments.

Theme Page

Repeats the poster message with the safety theme topic of the month.

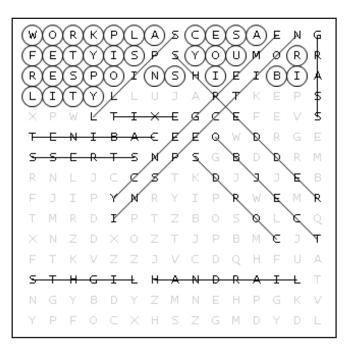
Safety Meeting Agenda

- Assemble participants.
- Hand out copy of theme page.
- Pass around Participant Sign-in Sheet.
- Read theme out loud and discuss aspects of the theme in the department. Give examples. Ask for ideas, etc.
- Discuss accidents/incidents/near misses over the last month.
- Issue safety Self-inspection Checklists for each department inspection team.
- Discuss inspection items noted from last reports and the status of completion of reported items.



PUZZLE ANSWERS

HIDDEN MESSAGE ANSWER



WORKPLACE SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSLBLLITY



General Self Inspection Program

Location, Area, or Department: Date:						
Surveyor:						
General Evaluation	Needs Action	Needs Improvement	Good	Very Good		
A. Property/Liability						
a. Fire protectionb. Housekeeping						
c. Slip/trip/fall						
d. Public safety						
B. Employee Safety						
a. Safety meetings						
b. Safety rulesc. Work conditions						
d. Auto/equipment						
Property/Liability					Yes	No
Fire protection						
Emergency numbers posted						
Fire extinguishers available/serviced						
Fire alarm panel showing system is o						
Automatic sprinkler system control va Automatic sprinkler heads clear of sto		•				
Flammable, combustible liquids store						
Flammable, combustible liquid containers stored in proper cabinet or container.						
Smoking, No Smoking areas designated/marked. Any cigarette butts noticed in No Smoking areas.						
Comments:						
Housekeeping						
Stairwells clear of combustible items. Furnace, hot water heater, and electric Work and public areas are clear of ext	cal panel areatension cords	s, boxes, equipme		ipping hazards.		
Floor surfaces kept clear of oils, other fluids, or water. Stored items are not leaning or improperly supported; heavy items are not up high.						
Comments:		-	_			
Slip/Trip/Fall						
Stair treads are in good condition; no	t worn, dama	aged or loose.				
Handrails for all stairs/steps. Guardrails for all elevated platforms.						
Stair handrails are in good condition; not loose or broken.						
Floor surfaces are even, with non-slip wax if applicable.						
All rugs are held down or have non-sl						
Any holes, pits or depressions are marked with tape, barricades, or guardrails. Wet floor signs are available and used.						
•						
Comments:						



General Self Inspection Program

Public Safety	Yes	No
Public areas kept clear of storage and supplies. Emergency lighting for public assembly areas in buildings. Evacuation plans posted for public assembly areas in buildings. Public areas have necessary warning or directional signs. Construction work has barriers, covers, and markings. Street and road signs noted in good condition, clear of obstructions. Sidewalks smooth and even; no holes, no raised or broken areas.		
Comments:		
Employee Safety		
Safety Meetings		
Held in the department. Meetings held monthly quarterly other ; documented Different topic each time. Covers department safety rules.		
Safety Rules		
Rules specific for this department. Rules are written, posted in the department. Reviewed with new employees.		
Work Conditions		
Employees exposed to: Heat Cold Rain/sleet/snow Use of chemicals Noise Work in confined spaces Work in trenches Traffic Blood/body fluids Other		
Auto and Equipment		_
Seat belts provided. Seat belts required to be used. Drivers noted wearing seat belts. All lights working including strobe lights, turn signals. Tires in good condition, tread, sidewalls. Glass in good condition; not cracked, broken. Reflective tape, signs in good condition. Any periodic, documented, self-inspection of the vehicles/equipment. Proper guards on mowers, other equipment. Comments:		



Safety Meeting Attendance Sign Up Sheet

City/County:	
Date:	
Department:	
Topic:	
торіс	
Attendees:	
	-
Next meeting scheduled for	
Next meeting scheduled for	
Safety Coordinator	



LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP YOU.

LGRMS HOME OFFICE

Dan Beck

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LAW ENFORCEMENT RISK CONTROL

Dennis Watts

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