

THE Partner

COOPERATIVE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY
Spring 2002



Focus on LP Safety in 2002

BY RICK SMITHPETER
Director of Loss Control

Are your LP safety programs up to speed? What can you do to improve your insurability? During 2002 our loss control department will be conducting LP Program Reviews for all of our clients. We are concerned with the recent rash of lawsuits involving propane explosions, and we want to ensure that all of our clients are meeting at least the minimum requirements set forth by federal, state, and local authorities.

Our goal is to minimize the risk stemming from inadequate LP safety programs that expose both your com-

pany and us to a potential lawsuit. We feel most co-ops have good programs in place that may require minor changes, if any, to bring them up to code. Sometime in the very near future, our loss control department personnel will be calling you to set up an appointment with all pertinent personnel to review your LP safety programs.

We are requiring all of our insureds to implement a four-part program that consists of customer awareness, CETP-trained employees or equivalent, leak/pressure test procedures, and LP system maintenance. Furthermore,



we will be reviewing driver qualification files to ensure that they are being maintained and contain the correct information. Additionally, we will be checking to ensure all applicable Department of Transportation requirements concerning LP delivery vehicles are being met.

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MISSION STATEMENT:

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Early Return to Work: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT



BY JOLYNN CURBEAM
Senior Claims Examiner

A common characteristic of “low cost” workers’ compensation programs is a good return-to-work program. An employer should develop a written return-to-work policy that is supported by management and consistently utilized.

The majority of injured workers want to return to work, but everyone has a different level of motivation. A comprehensive return-to-work program helps workers maintain motivation and morale while simultaneously lowering medical costs.

A good return-to-work program encompasses everything from preparation before the injury happens through an employee returning to work full-time. Much can be accomplished before the injury itself occurs. For example, it is important to provide employees with information on what to do if they are injured. Stress the importance of the timely notification of a supervisor or other designated contact when an injury occurs.

It is imperative that the employer defines and communicates the roles and responsibilities of the injured worker, his or her supervisor, and the administrator of the workers’ compensation program.

Physician relationships

It is always a good idea to establish a company physician. Building a rapport and relationship with a particular doctor or clinic will cut down on miscommunication and facilitate

getting light-duty restrictions for the injured worker as soon as he or she is capable.

To comply with the Nebraska workers’ compensation law and to avoid potential doctor shopping, every employee should fill out a FORM 50 – Employee’s Choice or Change of Doctor form. This allows employees to name their family doctor as treating physician for their workers’ compensation injury or to decline to choose, in which case the employer and/or **Cooperative Mutual** can name the treating physician. Preferably, the FORM 50 should be filled out at the time of hire, but it may be filled out at a later time, such as when the employee is injured.

Improve return times

When a lost-time workers’ compensation injury occurs, there are many ways to increase the likelihood of the employee returning in a timely manner. The employer should maintain communication and involvement with the employee to show the employer cares and to motivate the employee to return to work.

Though the injured worker can choose to see his or her personal physician, make choosing the company doctor appealing to the employee by offering to make the appointment and explaining that this medical provider knows where to send the bill and how to treat occupational injuries.

Finally, it is extremely important that the employer promptly report the claim to **Cooperative Mutual**.

Technically in Nebraska, when an injured worker is losing time, we have seven days from the date of injury to get a copy of that first report in to the Workers’ Compensation Court and 14 days from the date of injury to issue the initial lost-time pay to the employee. Other states have similar deadlines.

Prompt medical treatment of the injured worker is central to a timely, less-problematic recovery. Numerous studies have shown the impact of early intervention in driving down overall claim costs.

Quality of medical care is also key. The goal is always to provide the highest quality care available, which will save money in the long run. Incorrect diagnoses add expense and can lead to chronic conditions.

To assist with medical management, Cooperative Mutual does offer the Corvel MCO to its customers. The MCO directs workers to capable physicians in your area and is able to realize PPO bill reductions. Corvel is also in consistent contact with the Cooperative Mutual adjuster, providing updates and records so proper claim decisions can be made. For those cooperatives not signed up with the Corvel MCO, I encourage you to communicate with your adjuster to discuss medical issues and direction and to fax in any medical records or work status updates as soon as you receive them.

Lighten the load

Having light-duty work available for injured workers to return to reduces the cost of the workers’

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compensation claim by eliminating or reducing the amount of lost-time pay (TTD/TPD) paid to the claimant. So, how do you find alternate duty for injured workers? If no light-duty job exists, an alternate-duty job can be a composition of tasks that happen to be in the light physical-demand level rather than a regular job. Another technique is to remove tasks from several regular jobs that are not physically demanding for the injured worker.

It is important to note that the supervisor must ensure that the injured worker is not working beyond the restrictions provided by the doctor. Some supervisors have the opinion that having someone on alternate duty causes morale problems with other employees. Doesn't having an injured worker doing some work reduce the overall workload? The supervisor must lead by example and not tolerate or promote gossip about the validity of the injury or the subsequent level of disability. ■

BENEFITS OF A RETURN-TO-WORK PROGRAM

- 1.** Enables employer to receive some productivity rather than indemnifying injured workers for lost wages by paying TTD and getting no productivity.
- 2.** Helps injured employees heal faster and better as a result of performing modified work in lieu of sitting at home. Those with naturally low motivation will be adversely affected if they sit at home. In addition, injured workers with jobs don't have time for frequent visits to the doctor, resulting in lower medical costs.
- 3.** Eliminates situations where workers are totally off work for extended periods. These employees are very difficult, if not impossible, to get back to work.
- 4.** Eliminates situations where an employee actually has greater cash flow while collecting TTD, due to the lack of taxation. These employees may have an incentive not to return to work.
- 5.** Expedites the claim process.
- 6.** Builds goodwill between the employer and most employees.
- 7.** Deters employees from filing a claim "to get a few days off." ■

Take Special Care With Anhydrous



BY BRIAN TRAVIS
Loss Control Representative

The warmer weather and longer days mean the spring agronomy season is almost here. Anhydrous ammonia, a commonly used fertilizer, poses unique hazards that require special attention. While anhydrous is not dangerous when handled properly, exposure to this chemical can cause blindness, lung damage, burns, or death. Here are some precautions that should be followed when working with anhydrous ammonia:

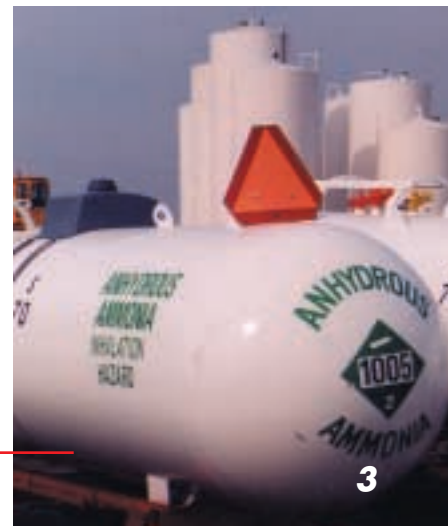
- Wear protective clothing. Ventless goggles or a full-face shield, impermeable rubber gloves, and a long-sleeved shirt offer the best protection.
- Never wear contact lenses, because the lenses collect the chemical and intensify the burning.
- Have a water source nearby. For transfer operations, it is recommended that a 150-gallon emergency dip tank be on hand, and don't forget to change the water in the tank regularly. It's also a good idea to keep an eight-ounce squeeze bottle close at hand. Finally, make sure that every nurse tank leaves the co-op with a full five-gallon emergency water tank and that the hoses are not

blocked or brittle.

- Stay out of the line of release when working with valves or hose couplings, and stand upwind during transfer operations.
- Be sure to use proper hoses and equipment when handling anhydrous ammonia.

If an accident does occur and a person is injured, taking immediate action is important. Remove contaminated clothing and thoroughly wash the skin and eyes with water for at least 15 minutes. Do not apply salves or ointments, because they can cause ammonia to burn more deeply. After first-aid treatment, get the burn victim to a physician as soon as possible.

Don't forget to review these precautions with your customers, because they may not be aware of all the precautions that should be taken. Even though the spring season is a busy season, take the time to follow proper procedures. Don't be blind to the dangers of anhydrous ammonia—your safety could depend on it. ■



Clearing the Confusion in Iowa “Revisited”



BY KYLE BROESDER
Loss Control Representative

Those of you affected by Iowa’s Department of Agriculture anhydrous ammonia tank protection guidelines might remember my article in the Fall 2001 *Partner*. This may have cleared the confusion about the materials and methods to use, but I am still hearing the question, “Why?” Though some think that it is because of the terrorist threat after 9/11, this all started well before that.

The process began with an OSHA settlement reached in western Iowa. A train had derailed and plowed into a cooperative’s anhydrous ammonia storage facility, and consequently, OSHA asked them to protect their anhydrous ammonia tank. I know...a train! That fact makes the barricades that you are installing look pretty insignificant.

I questioned OSHA about the wisdom behind their

reasoning, and they stated that they have only enforced barricading the complete tank in that one instance. Chief John Whipple of the Iowa Department of Ag stated that he believes the barricading is a good idea for added security. He stated that, to this point, no one has questioned the Department of Agriculture’s findings on barricading the anhydrous ammonia tanks.

I have exhausted my resources without finding a good explanation. If any of you have any additional questions or concerns on barricading anhydrous ammonia tanks, I suggest calling the two agencies involved in Iowa:

John R. Whipple, Chief
Commercial Feed & Fertilizer Bureau
515-282-8599 or e-mail John.Whipple@idals.state.ia.us

IOSH Enforcement Service
515-281-3606 or e-mail mary.bryant@osha.gov. ■

Fiberglass Tanks and 10-34-0



BY TEAGUE LOTTMAN
Staff Agronomist/Adjuster

Over the past couple of years, several **Cooperative Mutual** clients have experienced the collapse of fiberglass tanks. One common thread has linked these collapses—the tanks were filled with 10-34-0 fertilizer. However, we believe that simply filling the tanks with 10-34-0 did not, in itself, cause the collapse. Instead, it appears that a series of events must take place for collapse to occur.

In every instance of collapse, the tanks were filled to the top. In addition, air temperatures were warm when the tanks were filled. Again in each case, a rapid cool-down followed the fill, causing the 10-34-0 to expand and the fiberglass tank to collapse under the expansion pressures.

Since in most cases the tanks are in a dike with other tanks, not only do we have the loss of the tank and the 10-34-0 it contains, but also we often have damage to other tanks in the dike and the products in them. As you can imagine, this can result in a very costly and time-consuming loss.

At Cooperative Mutual we do not want to dictate how those we insure run their co-op but rather to give helpful advice on how to prevent a loss from occurring. In this case, our best advice would be to fill these tanks with water

only and put them outside your containment dike. However, we know that this is not always practical. So if you still need to use fiberglass tanks as a means of storing 10-34-0, don’t fill them completely full and try not to fill them in the winter when the chance of product expansion is greater.

If you have any questions, always feel free to contact your loss control representative or me. ■



A combination of fill levels and weather conditions can lead to costly fiberglass tank collapses.

SAFETY COMMITTEES TO BE TOPIC OF APRIL MEETING



BY HARLAN SCHAFFER
Vice President of
Production & Operations

In January, the Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Nebraska (ACSDN) met with great attendance from cooperatives across Nebraska. Following a short business meeting,

Doug Fletcher from OSHA's Omaha-area field office, made a presentation on the new OSHA injury and illness record-keeping forms—OSHA 300, 300A, and 301. If you would like more information on these forms and their use, you can check out OSHA's Web site at www.osha.gov.

During the business meeting, a number of topics for future training sessions were discussed. We will be discussing "Safety Committees – What's Required, What's Working, and What's Not" at our April 4 meeting, to be

held in Grand Island at the Midtown Holiday Inn beginning at 11 a.m. After a brief review of the program requirements, we will have several presentations by members with active safety committees. An open question-and-answer session, with the discussion of new ideas, will follow. Discussions of an update to the member directory and the associate membership/dues policy also will be on the agenda.

Safety managers from all Nebraska ag cooperatives are invited and encouraged to participate and become members of ACSDN. By developing and strengthening a network of safety managers from co-ops just like yours, we can pool our talents and experiences to achieve improved workplace safety and enhanced regulatory compliance through better understanding and mutual support. Many thanks to **Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company** for actively supporting ACSDN! ■

Focus on LP Safety in 2002

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The following is a brief summary of the items we will be looking for during our LP Program Review.

Customer awareness

Annual mailings are sent to every customer and delivery of warnings to new customers during their LP systems check. Special emphasis will be placed on ensuring "tenant" changes receive the safety information. Having up-to-date customer files for documentation is extremely important.

CETP-trained employees or equivalent

All employees working in the LP department are trained for their specific job duties. If they deliver propane and perform systems service, they will need to be trained in each specific area of expertise.

Initial and annual refresher training will be accomplished through a combination of CETP courses or an equivalent documented training program, CETP computer-based training, video training, and hands-on training.

If you have your own training program, it must be documented and reviewed to ensure it meets CETP requirements. We feel this is the most significant part of any LP safety program, and, in the past, the importance has been underestimated.

Leak/pressure test program

You ensure that you have a written program and adhere to the procedures. Management's support and enforcement of company policy and procedures in this area is extremely important. We allow several options

to meet this requirement. Documentation and consistency are key components of this program.

Maintenance of LP systems

You ensure that you have a written program that requires identifying problems with your own or customers' systems and corresponding documentation in each customer file.

We encourage all LP departments to review the above information and address any deficiencies in their programs prior to our review.

If you have questions or are in need of LP safety information, please contact your loss control representative and he or she will be glad to assist you. ■

Staff Updates



Terri Ramold

Terri Ramold brings a broad spectrum of experience to **Cooperative Mutual**, from her childhood days growing up on a farm in west

central Iowa to a varied insurance background. A resident of the rural farm community of Westside, Iowa, she went on to receive her bachelor of science degree in business from Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Mo. She worked full-time for the county assessor's office in Crawford County to put herself through college.

After college Terri entered the insurance field in rating/underwriting at National Indemnity. She's also worked in a home office environment and, all told, has 20 years of home office, agency, and brokerage experience. Terri received her Nebraska resident agency license while working at Alexander and Alexander. "I enjoy the customer service and detail part of the insurance industry," Terri says.

Terri's interests outside the workplace include music, reading, and spending time with her children. Her husband is a self-employed contractor, broadcast engineer, and announcer. She and her husband have two children: James, 8, and Jonathan, 2.

Anna, 6. Mark is a pharmaceutical rep with AstraZeneca.

Much of the couple's free time is devoted to attending their children's games and activities. When they can get away, JoAnn and Mark love to travel.



Kurt Schaecher

Being a multi-line claims adjuster is a job that requires a lot of diversity. That is the type of experience **Kurt**

Schaecher brings to Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company. "I enjoy working claims, from beginning to end," Kurt states. "There is always something different each day."

A native of David City, Neb., Kurt received his bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

After college Kurt worked for Eliaison & Knuth drywall for three years as a workers' compensation adjuster and a construction estimator. "Being a workers' compensation adjuster for a construction company gave me exposure to a lot of claims," he recalls. "As an estimator, I was able to gain construction knowledge about commercial buildings."

Kurt then was self-employed as an independent claims adjuster, handling mostly property losses until joining Cooperative Mutual. "It was very gratifying for me and gave me experience with property loss claims that I feel will help me in my new position at CMIC," Kurt explains. "As an adjuster, I enjoy getting into the meat of the claim—investigating, making phone calls, finding out what happened."

Kurt's wife, Leslie, works for Veri-

zon Wireless Communications in Omaha. They are expecting their first baby in April. When Kurt is not at work, he enjoys playing softball in the summer, hunting in the fall, and riding horses on his father-in-law's ranch.



Patty Munoz

Patty Munoz

has made the jump from rating life and health at Jefferson Pilot Financial to the property and casualty commercial lines at CMIC.

"I find that flexibility is your strongest asset in the insurance field," Patty says. "I enjoy working in the property and casualty commercial field."

Patty was born in Lincoln, Neb., but moved to Omaha when she was very young. Patty attended Clarkson College in Omaha, where she received her associate of science degree in occupational therapy.

After college Patty went to work for Jefferson Pilot Financial in the underwriting department. Ultimately, Patty was promoted to the life waiver and life claims department.

"This was a job where I could use both my medical training and my insurance knowledge," Patty says "I enjoyed working in claims. It was challenging and interesting, and the position gave me a strong background in life and disability claims."

Patty brings her experience in underwriting and claims to the rating team. Her goal is to learn and excel in the property and casualty field as our company continues to grow.

Patty currently resides in Council Bluffs, Iowa, with her son, John. Patty enjoys traveling, playing tennis, and camping. ■



JoAnn Bartolomei

JoAnn Bartolomei joined the Cooperative Mutual staff last fall on a part-time basis. She works in claims support Monday thru Friday

from 8:30 to 1:30.

Prior to coming to Cooperative Mutual, JoAnn was a full-time mom. She and husband Mark have three children: Matthew 10, Joey 9, and

OSHA & EPA Regulatory Update

EMPLOYER PAYMENT FOR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT – 29 CFR 1910.132

Generally, OSHA standards require that personal protective equipment (PPE) be provided and used when necessary to protect employees from hazards that can cause them injury or physical harm. The agency is proposing to revise its PPE standards, to clarify who is required to pay for such PPE.

Agency Contact: Marthe B. Kent – 202-693-1950

GRAIN HANDLING FACILITIES (SECTION 610 REVIEW) – 29 CFR 1910.272

OSHA is undertaking a review of its grain handling standard (29 CFR 1910.272) in accordance with the requirements of section 610 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act and section 5 of EO 12866. The review will cover the continued need for the rule; the nature of complaints or comments received from the public concerning the rule; the complexity of the rule; the extent to which the rule overlaps, duplicates, or conflicts with other federal rules and, to the extent feasible, with state and local rules; and the degree to which technology, economic conditions, or other factors have changed in the industries affected by the rule.

Agency Contact: John Martonik – 202-693-2043

INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION – 29 USC 653; 29 USC 655; 29 USC 657

OSHA has decided to develop an injury and illness prevention rule, because it said occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities are continuing to occur at an unacceptably high rate. The Agency is currently evaluating the appropriate scope and form of the proposed rule, as well as the hazards the rule will address, and is considering a number of regulatory and non-regulatory alternatives.

Agency Contact: Marthe B. Kent – 202-693-1950

SUBPART S – ELECTRICAL STANDARDS – 29 CFR 1910.SUBPART S

OSHA is planning to update the Subpart S Electrical Standard and will rely heavily on the materials involved in the development of the 2000 Edition of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) 70 E standard for Electrical Safety Requirements for Employee Workplaces. This revision will provide the first update of Subpart S-Electrical since the standard was originally published in 1981. It will thus allow the latest technological developments to be considered; OSHA will address several of these state-of-the-art safety developments for the first time. The update of Subpart S-Electrical will also permit the completion of standards covering safety-related maintenance requirements and safety requirements for special equipment.

Agency Contact: Marthe B. Kent – 202-693-1950

UPDATE AND REVISION TO THE EXIT ROUTES STANDARDS – 29 CFR 1910.58

The standard being revised is one of OSHA's oldest and most difficult to understand. The Agency has identified the exit route standard as one in need of revision, because it is out of date and unnecessarily complex and stakeholders have recommended that the standard be updated quickly. OSHA said it believes that revising the standard will lead to better voluntary compliance and fewer disputes about violations. This rule was originally listed under RIN-AB55.

Agency Contact: Marthe B. Kent – 202-693-1950

RULEMAKING TO MODIFY THE LIST OF SOURCE CATEGORIES FROM WHICH FUGITIVE EMISSIONS ARE CONSIDERED IN MAJOR SOURCE DETERMINATIONS – 40 CFR 51, 52, 70, 71

This rulemaking will expand the list of source categories for which fugitive emissions are to be considered in major source determinations under the New Source Review (Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Nonattainment New Source Review) and title V programs. As provided by 302(j) of the Act, EPA adopted rules 8/7/80 that require, for specific source categories, the inclusion of fugitive emissions when determining if a stationary source is a major source. In the preamble to the 1980 rulemaking, EPA limited the scope of the last category to categories that were being regulated under sections 111 or 112 as of the effective date of the rulemaking, 8/7/80. EPA indicated that at the time of any future rulemaking proposing to regulate additional categories of sources under sections 111 or 112, EPA would conduct a parallel rulemaking in determining whether the sources were major stationary sources. EPA did not conduct these parallel rulemakings as intended and is now conducting a rulemaking pursuant to section 302(j) to address the source categories which became subject to section 111 and 112 standards after 8/7/80.

Agency Contact: Joanna Swanson – 919-541-5282

PESTICIDE MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL – 40 CFR 165

The action develops procedures for mandatory and voluntary recall actions under section 19(b) of FIFRA and would establish criteria for acceptable storage and disposal plans which registrants may submit to the agency to become eligible for reimbursement of storage costs. This action establishes procedures for indemnification of owners of suspended and cancelled pesticides for disposal.

Agency Contact: David Stangel – 202-564-4162

WPS: PESTICIDE WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD; GLOVE AMENDMENT – 40 CFR 170

This final rule would create greater flexibility in requirements of the 1992 Worker Protection Standard related to the use of gloves by workers and applicators.

Agency Contact: Donald Eckerman – 703-305-5944

PESTICIDE MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL: STANDARDS FOR PESTICIDE CONTAINERS AND CONTAINMENT – 40 CFR 165; 156

As proposed, this rule would establish standards for removal of pesticides from containers and for rinsing containers; facilitate the safe use, refill, reuse, and disposal of pesticide containers by establishing standards for container design, labeling, and refillings; and establish requirements for containment of stationary bulk containers and for containment of pesticide dispensing areas.

Agency Contact: Jude Andraesen – 703-308-9342

Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company Annual Meeting



The Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company annual meeting will be held Friday, March 8, 2002. There will be a business meeting covering results for the current year, followed by a discussion of the status of today's insurance marketplace.

Of course, the meeting wouldn't be complete without a wonderful dinner and exciting entertainment. Glenda and Mike Mann will begin the evening's entertainment with a lively combination of magic and ventriloquism. The Johnny Ray Gomez Band will follow with music to get you dancing.

Join us at the Embassy Suites in Omaha for our program. And, if you can't make it, please sign and return your proxy to our office.

We hope to see you there! ■

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