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Co-ops Band Together to Promote Safety

T

he success of the Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Nebraska has spurred a similar group in Iowa.

There has been a lot of interest in this kind of organization, and co-ops have seen the benefits that improved safety can bring to their operations. On Feb. 6, we held the first meeting for the Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Iowa at the Gateway Center in Ames, Iowa.

Fifteen people attended, including nine people who are part of the startup group. Participants came from North Iowa Co-op in Mason City, Farmers Co-op in New Hampton, Central Counties in Reinbeck, River Valley Cooperative of Eldridge, First

BY RICK SMITHPETER
Director of Loss Control



Cooperative Association in Cherokee, NEW Cooperative in Fort Dodge, and Pro Cooperative in Gilmore City.

Dennis Knight of NEW Cooperative will chair the new group. **Mark Hambleton** of Pro Cooperative will serve as vice chairman, while **Diane Nelson** of North Iowa Cooperative serves as the secretary/treasurer. These folks weren't elected but will volunteer this year to help get the organization up and running.

Here's what Dennis Knight had to say about the new safety group: "We plan to meet about four times a year to share safety

information about what works and what doesn't work. Since we have to train employees on the same safety topics each year, it gets challenging to present this information in a format that's new and interesting. I think this group will be very

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Dennis Knight of NEW Cooperative (center), Mark Hambleton of Pro Cooperative and Diane Nelson of North Iowa Cooperative will lead the new Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Iowa group.

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MISSION STATEMENT:

To build an independent, profitable, policyholder-driven insurance company providing superior service and innovative products.

Are Delivery Snags Impacting Your Insurance?



BY DENNIS RIESELMAN
Director of Claims

As a co-op, delivering products is an important service you provide for your customers. But there's always a risk that something will go wrong.

Every year, we see a surprising number of claims resulting from the delivery process. They seem to occur more frequently when a relief driver substitutes for the usual driver.

In some cases, the driver is using a vehicle that he or she is not familiar with and the substitute vehicle may have a different compartment configuration than what the person is used to. Sometimes, the instructions given to a driver are not clear as to who or where the delivery should be made and this lack of clarity may result in a claim.

Spot the trouble areas

Our co-op customers typically have two types of deliveries—feed and petroleum products.

With feed, we have claims reported where the wrong compartment on the truck was delivered to the correct customer and where the correct compartment was delivered to the wrong customer. Also, there have been claims where the correct feed was delivered to the correct customer but the feed was placed in the wrong storage area. Then the customer fed it to the wrong livestock.

With petroleum deliveries, claims happen when the wrong fuel goes into a wrong compartment tank and is delivered to the right customer who places it in a storage tank that is not properly labeled. We've seen claims where the fuel furnace tank is located in the basement of a home and the product was placed in a line that did not lead to the tank, since the line had been disconnected.

In another case fuel was delivered to the wrong customer through an air duct that resulted in the flooding of a basement. We have had claims where gas was placed in a fuel tank used to run diesel equipment and diesel was put in a gas tank used for golf carts. In these cases, the deliveries were made by relief drivers who were unfamiliar with the customer and their facilities, or the drivers were using a substitute vehicle.

Controlling problems

We've paid claims, some fairly expensive, on these delivery errors. Note that almost all of these claims resulted from the delivery person's error.

We hope all general managers will implement a delivery awareness program with their petroleum and feed department employees.

We realize that this won't eliminate all claims. However, a proactive approach to eliminating delivery claims will help you save on your insurance costs.

Here's a list of some hazards that every co-op delivery employee should know:

- **Know the delivery vehicle.** Be aware of the size of compartment and the contents of each compartment. Know whether each compartment is color-coded or tagged properly.
- **Know the product to be delivered.** Check tags and codes. Identify the tank by smell or color, and verify the product to determine its use.
- **Know your customer.** Know where to deliver, and make sure the delivered product is placed in the correct tank or bin. Verify that the storage facility will protect the product after delivery. Personally contact the customer when the product is delivered.
- **Know how the customer will use the product.** Uses may include fuel for furnaces, diesel vehicles, or gas vehicles; feed for cattle, hogs, or sheep; or special feeds for special livestock or poultry.

When the delivery person has complete control of the delivery process, claim hazards can be minimized. For your co-op, this can lead to lower insurance costs and the chance for increased profits. ■

Implement awareness programs to help control delivery-related insurance claims.



Stay Safe While Loading Grain Into Railcars



BY BRIAN TRAVIS
Loss Control Representative

For employees who work around railcars, remaining alert should be automatic. Unfortunately, with the rush to get cars loaded, common sense often gets pushed to the side.

To protect against accidents, use preventive measures like written policies, fall protection devices, and safety meetings before train loading starts. Also, have employees keep in constant radio communication with each other to prevent problems during the loading process.

Protect against disaster

Use a written policy to explain the procedures employees should follow during train loading. The policy should explain procedures for preparing railcars, moving railcars, operating locomotives or trackmobiles, and inspecting the track. Employees should review the policy each time before they begin to load cars.

Hold a safety meeting for all employees who will be loading a train before they start working. Have

employees go over the company policy and discuss safety precautions. Assign job responsibilities, and explain what employees should do during inclement weather or other special circumstances.

When employees are working on top of a railcar, there is always the possibility that they could fall and seriously hurt themselves. These employees need to have fall protection equipment to help prevent injuries.

Communication is essential among all crew members when loading railcars. Employees should use two-way radios and keep in constant contact with each other. Railcars should not be moved until all employees have been notified and they give the all-clear signal.

Your company will be free of accidents if employees remember to use common sense, maintain a high level of awareness of their surroundings, and use preventive measures. ■

Plant Designs, Mixing Procedures Impact Claims



BY TEAGUE LOTTMAN
Agronomist/Adjuster

If you've attended one of my agronomy meetings, you know I break down the types of agronomy claims turned into **Cooperative Mutual** each year. I also calculate the dollar amounts we spend on those claims.

In the last couple of years, we've seen an alarming trend in the category of mixing claims. There seem to be two reasons why these claims are increasing. The first is that Roundup® has taken over the marketplace. If you make a mistake with mixing and accidentally get Roundup in the wrong tank, the result can be devastating.

Pay attention to plant design

Your plant design also makes a difference. It seems that

more and more chemical mixing is going on in the plant rather than in the field. When we made a mistake out in the field, the most we ever damaged was 40 acres. If we make a mistake in the plant, we can damage up to 400 acres. When we throw Roundup in that mix, it can get worse.

I don't claim to be an engineer or a plumber, so I won't tell you how to plumb your plant so you don't have claims. I will suggest that your agronomy manager, the person who runs the plant, and the person who designed it should do a thorough walk-through before the season starts. These three people should be able to find and fix any design and procedural flaws that have caused problems in the past.

You may find that it's best not to mix any Roundup or products like it in your plant but mix that type of product out in the field.

I'm always impressed at the ingenuity I find at the co-ops we insure. I believe that if we take some time before the season starts and inspect your plant and your mixing procedures we can reverse some of these negative trends. ■

EPA Discusses Risk-Management Plans

The Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Nebraska held their regular meeting on Jan. 9, 2003, at the Mid-Town Holiday Inn in Grand Island.

Chairman **Harlan Schafer** started the meeting at 9:30 a.m. Fifty-six people attended the meeting, the largest group to attend a meeting since the Safety Directors meetings started.

Terry Lively, loss control representative with **Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company**, explained the new DOT CDL disqualification rules that went into effect Sept. 30, 2002. The changes involve five additional provisions for disqualification.

Companies need to explain these changes to their drivers, since the new rules list three new offenses that are considered "serious violations." Terry emphasized that companies need to keep track of drivers' moving violations, and counsel them when they receive a violation. Terry also explained what should be kept in a driver's file and the importance of this information.

Leadership changes

The business meeting started at 10:30 a.m. The proposed bylaws were handed out and discussion followed. A couple of minor changes were suggested, and the bylaws were approved with these changes.

Don Eisenhauer was introduced as the group's new chairman. Don had served as vice-chairman, and became chairman after Harlan's one-year term expired. **Bud Ready** was elected as the new vice-chairman, and **Roberta Christiancy** was re-elected as secretary/treasurer. **Pete Jepsen** thanked Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company for putting this group together. It has been very beneficial to all involved.

Members discuss training topics

Training topics for the April meeting were discussed. **Jerry White** with Compliance Advisory Services suggested that the group might want to invite the fire marshals to explain proposed changes to the ANSI codes for ammonia

bulk plants.

Nebraska is currently using the 1989 codes, and the EPA is using the most current version when doing their inspections. The state is looking at bringing standards up to the new codes. This would mean updates for most ammonia plants in Nebraska.

The group also talked about having **Eldon Diedrick** with the Department of Labor explain the SHARP Program. Eldon will be contacted to present this information at the next meeting. CMIC's **Rick Smithpeter** also suggested that Eldon talk about confined space entry and bin entry.

Improving risk management

After lunch, **Reuben McCullers** with the EPA spoke about the requirements for risk management plans (RMPs) as they relate to anhydrous ammonia plants. Reuben showed what the inspectors looked for during their inspections. He also explained the difference between an inspection and an audit.

Participants learned that RMPs are not just pages in a book, but plans that are understood by the employees responsible for the plant. EPA inspects to make sure that written plans are in compliance and cooperatives are putting into action the items in their plan booklets.

The next Ag Cooperative Safety Directors of Nebraska meeting is scheduled for April 3 at 11 a.m. at the Mid-Town Holiday Inn in Grand Island. ■

In January, EPA's Reuben McCullers spoke about the requirements for risk management plans.



Use Tailgate Training Sessions to Improve Safety



BY KYLE BROESDER
Loss Control Representative

I recently read an article that said there were three primary causes of unsafe acts resulting in workplace injuries and illnesses:

1. **The employee did not know how to perform the task safely or properly.**
2. **The employee did not have the proper equipment to perform the task safely.**
3. **The employee knew how to perform the task safely and had the proper equipment, but just didn't do the job safely.**

Reason No. 3 caused 92% of the accidents investigated by the survey—the employee performed the job unsafely. The employee made a conscious decision not to comply with what he or she knew or had been taught about safe work practices.

What's the solution? Try tailgate training.

Get employees involved

Tailgate training is a good way to involve your supervisors and other longtime employees in safety training, because it:

- **Is oriented toward small groups of employees who meet around the tailgate of a truck, in the field, in the break room, or in another comfortable spot.**
- **Focuses on just one safety topic at a time.**
- **Lasts just 10 to 15 minutes—short enough to keep your workers' attention.**

Supervisors and employees present the trainings in a casual, interactive way. This helps everyone get involved and makes it more likely that employees will buy into the safety program.

Training efforts shouldn't just involve new employees. Look at your loss trends. You may be surprised to learn that your "experienced" employees are driving up injury/accident rates.

In order to be effective, it's important to do tailgate training on a regular basis. It's good to conduct sessions an average of once a week and dedicate a specific time for the training.



Tailgate training meetings are short and focus on one safety issue at a time. They are a good way to remind your employees about safety.

Try these tailgate training tips:

- **Limit your sessions to a small number of workers. Six to 10 is a good number.**
- **Hold sessions early in the week but not on Monday mornings.**
- **Review your accident records. Choose training topics related to close calls or accidents that have occurred.**
- **Choose other topics by "walking" your operation and looking for situations that could result in injuries. Also, ask employees for their ideas.**
- **Prepare for your presentation by using a short fact sheet, prepared script, or by outlining your own ideas.**
- **Use visual aides whenever possible, including warning signs or illustrations on a piece of poster board.**
- **Practice ahead of time, and photocopy any handouts ahead of time.**
- **Keep your presentation structured but informal. Encourage questions and discussion of the topic.**
- **Don't use terms your workers won't understand. Keep your presentation simple, but don't "talk down" to your employees.**
- **Allow time for any additional questions at the end of the session.**
- **Document your training session by having workers sign a log showing that they were trained. Keep that log on file.**

Involving employees in your cooperative's safety efforts will give them a sense of ownership. Tailgate trainings promote safety on a regular basis and show management's commitment to this important topic. ■

Nebraska Introduces Liability Legislation

On behalf of the Nebraska Propane Gas Association (NPGA), Sen. Ed Schrock (38) of Elm Creek introduced LB237 in the 2003 legislative session.

LB237 requests notification from customers to suppliers on all work performed on propane systems. It also limits supplier liability if notification is not provided and an inspection is not done prior to system start-up.

The increase in liability lawsuits and the insurance crisis are top issues plaguing the propane industry. LB237 is one step NPGA is taking to help level the playing field and reduce marketers' exposure. LB237 can help protect marketers in liability cases involving do-it-yourselfers who change their propane systems. Marketers have a right to

know when customers change their propane system.

installation, modification, repair, or servicing of his or her propane system.

- The supplier is not liable for damages of injury or property that result from any occurrence caused by the change to the system, unless the supplier had received notification and inspected the system prior to the system being placed into service.

With the help of propane defense lawyer Mark Krause, NPGA's board of directors worked on LB237 since the spring of 2002. Similar legislation has been passed or is a work in progress in Alabama, Georgia,

Missouri, Wyoming, and Arizona.

LB237 was routed to the Natural Resources Committee, and the hearing was scheduled for Feb. 19, 2003. ■



LB237 states:

- An LP-gas customer shall provide immediate written notice to the supplier of any

OSHA Revises Rule on Recording Hearing Loss

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a final rule on July 1, 2002, that revised the criteria for recording work-related hearing loss.

Since Jan. 1, 2003, employers are required to record work-related hearing loss cases when an employee's hearing test shows a marked decrease in overall hearing. Employers can make adjustments for hearing loss caused by aging. They can also seek the advice of a physician or licensed health care professional to determine if the loss is work-related and perform additional hearing tests to verify the persistence of the hearing loss.

"Hearing loss can result in a serious disability and put employees at

"Hearing loss can result in a serious disability and put employees at risk of being injured on the job."

risk of being injured on the job," said OSHA administrator John Henshaw. "The approach will help employers better protect their workers and help all of us improve our national injury and illness statistics and prevent future hearing loss among our nation's workers."

Under the new rule, the criteria will record 10-decibel shifts from the employee's initial hearing test when they also result in an overall hearing level of 25 decibels. The old criteria recorded 25-decibel shifts.

Detailed information on OSHA's record-keeping requirements is available online at www.osha.gov. ■

Watch for Lower Hazardous Material Permit Fees



BY TERRY LIVELY
Loss Control
Representative

If you transport or offer for transport any hazardous materials, the Department of Transportation's Research and Special Programs Administration is reducing fees for the annual hazardous materials permit.

The current fee structure is \$300 for small businesses and nonprofit business and \$2,000 for large businesses.

For 2003 to 2005, the proposed reduction means small businesses and nonprofit businesses will pay \$150, while large businesses will pay \$300.

Starting in 2006, small businesses and nonprofit businesses will pay \$275, while large businesses will pay \$1,000.

These funds are used to provide training and education assistance for hazardous material emergency response personnel. The adjustments were needed after a surplus was found in the RSPA Hazardous Materials fund. The initial rate was changed to the current fee structure in 2000 after Congress determined that the system was not fully funding the

state and local hazmat efforts.

Paying refunds

The initial price structure established in 2000, along with the Shippers and Transporters of Hazardous Materials requirements, generated nearly \$6.7 million more per year than expected.

RSPA will review the Hazardous Material fund in 2005 to determine if the forecasted pay structure for the years 2006 and beyond will be able to meet the fund's needs. Any company that used the multiple-year registration and paid in advance will receive a partial refund later this year. ■

Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company Annual Meeting

The Cooperative Mutual Insurance Company annual meeting will be held **Friday, March 14, 2003**. There will be a business meeting covering results for the current year and plans for next 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.

Join us at the Embassy Suites in Omaha's Old Market 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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