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THE ALLIANCE ADVISOR

APRIL 2024

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NEWS AND SAFETY INFORMATION

Safe Workplace & Loyalty Award Distribution

Eligible members on our June/July cycles will receive a Safe Workplace Award over the next few weeks. The monetary award recognizes our members' efforts to maintain a healthy and safe workplace, as evidenced by a positive loss experience, while incentivizing all members to improve workplace conditions and

minimize workplace injuries. Together with our Loyalty Award program, every member of the Comp Alliance shares in our success as we continue to improve safety for municipal and school employees throughout New York State. The Comp Alliance recently distributed Loyalty Awards to eligible members on the January cycle. Renewing members on the June and July cycles should expect to receive a loyalty award this fall.



AOT Annual Meeting & Haber Recipients

In February the Comp Alliance had the privilege of attending the Association of Towns Annual Meeting and presenting the 2024 Haber Leadership Award to two of our recipients, the Town of Cato and the Town of Penfield. The award recognizes the efforts both towns have made to establish a “culture of safety” to keep their workplaces safe for employees and reduce the frequency and severity of workers’ compensation claims.

As a result of the efforts of the elected officials, managerial staff, and employees of the town, Penfield has elevated the importance of workplace safety, significantly reduced the frequency and severity of workplace injuries, and saved its taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in workers’ compensations costs over the last several years. Additionally, due to the efforts of Cato's elected officials, managerial staff, and employees, the town has not experienced a workplace injury or accident in more than 8 years.



From the left, Board Chairman Gerry Geist, Executive Director Mike Kenneally, Town of Penfield Supervisor Jeff Leenhouts, and Town of Cato Supervisor Charles Ray

Thank you to all who attended the Comp Alliance training sessions, Managing Stress in the Public Service and Maintaining Non-Toxic Workplaces, and our member appreciation reception. We look forward to seeing you at the Association of Towns Annual Meeting and Training School next year!

Managing Workplace Stress & PTSD

Workplace injuries most often center around a task that causes a specific injury. However, mental illness may not be the result of one event and oftentimes is not a universal workplace injury, as people respond to stressors differently. When we fail to be mindful of our overall health, day-to-day pressures, stress, and anxiety can build into something bigger and more damaging. Many aspects of work can contribute to a stress-related workers' compensation claim. As June is National PTSD Month, this article focuses on the aspects of workplace stress along with the causes, symptoms, and treatments for PTSD.

A person's mental health is an important component of our overall well-being and is equally as vital as the physical health of employees. A person who might be the most physically fit and capable of completing any manual task could still be under mental strains which prevent them from being productive at work. Mental strains are stressors that affect how one perceives and reacts to their environment, impacting an employee's social interactions, productivity, performance, safety, and attendance.

Stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Workplace stress can be created by the perception of having little control but many demands. Stress affects people in a variety of ways such as muscle tension, headaches, stomach discomfort, high blood pressure, and heart disease, so ignoring workplace stress can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, coworkers, and the communities our municipal employees serve.

June is National PTSD Month and while most of us view this as a risk to first responders, all workers have the potential to suffer from a traumatic event, carrying over feelings, emotions, and stress into other areas of our work and personal lives. Acute stress disorder and PTSD symptoms cannot be ignored in the workplace, so it's important to equip employees with the tools to handle crises. Consider informing staff about your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and these resources in the event they are suffering through an event they cannot easily control:

- [CDC](#)
- [OSHA](#)
- [American Institute of Stress](#)
- [Center for Workplace Mental Health](#)

continue →

Managing Workplace Stress & PTSD (cont.)

Aspects of mental health struggles include:

- Stress
- Acute Stress
- Chronic Stress
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Unmanaged stress can contribute to:

- Physical/Health concerns
- Anxiety/Burnout
- Suicide
- Substance Abuse Disorder

Acute stress is a dramatic physiological and psychological reaction to a specific event.

- Examples: Attendance at work, concerns about an upcoming situation or event, a recent argument, running late, a road rage incident

Chronic stress, however, is a consistent sense of feeling pressured and overwhelmed over a long period.

- Examples: Bad relationship, stressful job, toxic home life, ongoing health concerns, poor sleep habits

PTSD usually develops after experiencing traumatic events. Sometimes a shocking, scary, or dangerous experience can be so intense that it can have an emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical impact on a person. Traumatic events can happen to workers in all industries and are not limited to police officers or firefighters. Some examples of traumatic events that can happen in workplaces are:

- Explosions or chemical releases
- Major vehicle accidents
- Coworkers being injured or dying on the job
- Abuse or assault of a coworker or clients

After experiencing a traumatic event people may:

- Feel anxious, sad, or angry.
- Have terrifying thoughts or flashbacks.
- Have recurring nightmares.
- Be confused or unable to think clearly.
- Have a hard time falling and staying asleep.
- Frighten easily.

If these symptoms continue long after the event or affect day-to-day life, they can be signs of acute stress disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. Both should be addressed by professional help. →

Managing Workplace Stress & PTSD (cont.)

Supervisors should take note of these potential conditions and encourage the use of professional assistance through an employee benefit program, or through the state's emotional support hotlines, accessed via text, email, or phone call, that have been set up to assist workers with counseling. Highlight supportive policies and practices such as:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Time management techniques
- Work-life balance
- Relaxation and mindfulness techniques
- Healthy lifestyle choices
- Team building and social support

For municipal supervisors, your role is to understand stress is part of the business and to convey that to your employees so that they can understand and manage it, too. Communication and resiliency are two of the most important factors that constrain stress, whether personal or business-related. Resiliency is more than coping; it is about confronting crises and difficult situations without becoming overwhelmed. Anyone in management understands that work involves some inherent risk. That is why resilience is an effective tool in today's business world. Resilience means controlling your ego, not panicking in the face of a setback, and having the patience and ability to stay focused on long-term goals.

Supervisors can better handle stress by fostering a positive work environment through a positive attitude, maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life, improving patience for work situations, and asserting themselves appropriately with a clear and direct message.

- Identify your stressors. Note what stresses you out during the workday and how you respond.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Set aside time for yourself.
- Step away from work.
- Maintain a regular exercise routine.
- Improve your sleeping habits.
- See a therapist.
- Adjust your approach.

With the potential for employees to suffer from stressful work situations, municipal supervisors should be aware of the signs coworkers may display and mitigate through positive interactions and guidance for proper stress management techniques and services. Look for additional resources on stress and PTSD during June, when we'll share more with our members for PTSD Awareness Month.

Welcoming A New Employee

Conor Hayden - Marketing Representative

We are excited to welcome Conor who joined the Comp Alliance team in February! He works alongside Aaron Reader and Shawn Roes to support our members' workers' compensation needs.



Timely Reporting of Claims

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) monitors the timeliness of all lost time claims. There are several areas the WCB monitors for timeliness. This includes the First Report of Injury (FROI) C-2F filing, initial payments, subsequent payments, and controversy. They also track the timeliness of suspensions, when benefits are discontinued because the injured worker returns to work. Late reporting can result in over \$1,400 assessed in penalties, so reporting a claim promptly is crucial!

After the employer gathers all the details surrounding the claim, the Claims team will investigate to identify any red flags and determine the potential exposure, compensability, and severity of the injuries. It is vital to be timely not only when reporting a claim, but also to maintain that communication afterward. It is just as important that the return-to-work status is reported promptly. The WCB can assess up to \$350 in penalties for late reporting of the return-to-work status. There are additional penalties at \$50 per form for failure to file C-11, Work Status, and C-240, Payroll Statement, forms punctually. Timely claim reporting can help reduce costs and smoothly return employees to work.

Upcoming Training Seminars

Stay on top of your annual state-required training! We cover PESH-mandated topics including Workplace Violence, Right-to-Know, and Bloodborne Pathogens in all training sessions unless noted as HAZWOPER. Take a look at the upcoming Q2 training below and visit www.compalliance.org for our full calendar.

Upcoming Training Seminars (cont.)

HAZWOPER

Monday, 4/22, 8:00 - 8:30 am

Wednesday, 5/8, 8:00 - 8:30 am

Upcoming Virtual Trainings

- Monday, 4/22: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Wednesday, 4/24: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Monday, 4/29: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Tuesday, 4/30: 5 PM - 7 PM
- Monday, 5/6: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Wednesday, 5/8: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Monday, 5/13: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Thursday, 5/16: 1 PM - 3 PM
- Monday, 5/20: 10 AM - 12 PM
- Wednesday, 5/22: 10 AM - 12 PM

Upcoming Conferences



The banner features a dark blue background with a honeycomb pattern of yellow hexagons. Several hexagons contain images: a group of people, a man in a suit, a large outdoor gathering, a night scene with fireworks, and a group of people in a meeting. The NYCOM logo is on the left, and the Sagamore Bolton Landing logo is on the right. The text at the bottom reads: "May 15-17, 2024" and "NYCOM Annual Meeting and Training School".

NYCOM

The Sagamore
Bolton Landing

May 15-17, 2024
NYCOM Annual Meeting and Training School

The NYCOM Annual Meeting is almost here! We look forward to seeing you at the Sagamore May 15-17. Be sure to attend our training or stop by our booth and say hello.

Upcoming Conferences (cont.)

Come see us at any of these additional upcoming conferences!

4/21 - 4/24: NYSTCA Annual Conference

4/24 - 4/25: 2024 Adirondack Planning Forum

5/1 - 5/2: Tug Hill Commission Local Government Conference

5/7 - 5/8: Association of Towns Finance School - Geneva

5/14 - 5/15: Association of Towns Finance School - Albany

6/2 - 6/5: ASBO Education Summit & Expo

6/3 - 6/5: Association of Towns Highway School

6/6: Southern Tier West Local Government Conference

