

**CITY OF ELK RIVER  
SAFETY COMMITTEE  
HELD AT FIRE STATION #2  
MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2013**

The Safety Committee meeting began at 2:00 p.m.

Members present: T. John Cunningham, Safety Coordinator; Jennifer Johnson, Administration; Butch Pelarski, Building Maintenance; Steve Benoit, Recreation; Bob Kluntz, Police; John Baas, Parks; Lauren Wipper, Human Resources

Members absent: Mike Thiry, Utilities; a representative from Community Development; Perry Milless, Streets; Rich Czech, Ice Arena; Dale Eckert, WWTP; Vickie Berg, Liquor Stores; Paula Schwichtenberg, Fire Department; Pete Nielsen, Water Department

**1. Approve Safety Committee Minutes**

Approved were the minutes from the December 19, 2012, safety committee meeting. January and February, 2013, meetings were cancelled.

**2. Facility Checklists**

No facility checklists were turned in.

**3. Anoka Tech Update**

Nothing noted.

**4. Safety Training**

Chief Cunningham noted the City Council recently approved a 5-year contract with Northern Capital Insurance as the city's insurance agent of record. This company will help improve the city's workman's comp management, assess the city's risks and show high-risk areas, and provide ways to help manage our safety program.

Captain Kluntz agreed with Chief Cunningham, noting the numerous changes over the past few years in areas such as MSDS sheets. He noted the numerous areas of risk employees face, such as the gun range and the handling of hazardous materials, to name a few. He felt it important to offer a point of contact to allow employees access to assistance in handling these detailed- specific areas.

Ms. Wipper commented that in order for a safety program to be viable and work, it starts at the director's level and trickles down to supervisors and staff. She noted there is a void in particular areas where supervisors don't know if specific training is required for the employees they supervise. She noted the city's statistics are o.k. but are trending up and felt particular areas of concern were needed in order to specifically address them.

Chief Cunningham agreed, noting the need for a meeting at a director's level to address all safety concerns and determine specific areas of need.

Chief Cunningham and Mr. Benoit proposed a meeting to address seasonal employee training needs. Chief Cunningham noted seasonal employees from parks, streets, and waste water would also require training.

Mr. Pelarski provided an update on the ergonomic changes made to the city hall front desk. New lighting features would be installed to offer lighting variations for staff. A new desk section will also

be installed, which will allow for the receptionist to adjust their workstation height to fit their needs. The police department is currently using this type of desk with good results.

## 5. **Accident Reviews**

### Accident #1

“An employee was carrying dirty work clothes from car to shop, slipped on icy snow-covered blacktop. Fell, got up and fell again, injured right, lower back.”

The Safety Committee discussed the situation at the maintenance facility, noting this location was under construction during the winter months, temporary construction equipment was housed at the location, staffing levels were stretched thin to shovel and salt walking spaces in a timely manner, and overall winter conditions all contributed to a more dangerous setting. Ms. Wipper commented on a sign she had seen recently at another municipal location, suggesting people “walk like a penguin,” encouraging people to slow down and take careful steps.

### Accident #2

“Employee was driving. Traffic was slowing so employee applied brakes. Vehicle behind employee did not slow and struck the back of employee’s vehicle. Employee reports sore neck and left calf. Other driver cited for failure to drive with due care as she was on the phone.”

The Safety Committee discussed the accident. Captain Kluntz noted the city vehicle being driven has been in other accidents. It was determined there wasn’t anything more the employee could do to prevent the accident.

### Accident #3

“Employee was doing department defensive tactics yearly training. Doing a body take down employee fell with force on left shoulder causing it to separate. Employee rolled shoulder back into joint.”

The Safety Committee discussed the injury. Captain Kluntz noted the employee is prone to shoulder injuries. However, the mats used in this training were insufficient and bids were being sought to update to a thicker type of mat. No other suggestions were found.

## 6. **Department Concerns/Updates**

### Human Resources Department

Ms. Wipper expressed her concerns regarding the change in the culture of safety for city employees and felt since former safety personnel “Safety Dave” has been gone, the positive tone and importance of safety seems to have been forgotten. She felt it important for employees to feel comfortable expressing concerns to their co-workers or visitors when faced with an unsafe situation and not feel peer pressure by acting in a safety-conscious manner.

Captain Kluntz agreed.

Chief Cunningham also agreed and noted employees should be confident their safety concerns can be expressed anonymously and won’t go ignored, nor would there be retribution. He felt that directors should set the tone for safety and they should be communicating a positive, supportive tone to their staff that workplace safety is important and can save lives.

### Building

No one present.

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Arena/Streets

No one present.

Recreation

No concerns.

WWTP

No concerns.

Parks Department

No concerns.

Police Department

No concerns.

Building Maintenance

Mr. Pelarski discussed an incident occurring at the library and asked if library staff knew who to contact should an incident take place that required building maintenance to respond. He felt there was a lack of communication between library staff and building maintenance, and wondered if new librarian Will Hollerich was aware of building maintenance procedures.

Chief Cunningham stated he would have a discussion with library staff and building maintenance to determine a proper and effective course of action for maintenance concerns at the library. He also commented that a work order management system was being discussed by the Community Operations and Development director and the library needs should be addressed.

Utilities

No one present.

Administration

No concerns.

8. **Old Business**

No old business was reported.

9. **New Business**

Due to recent staff and department adjustments, it was agreed that department representatives needed updating, particularly for Fire and Building Safety, and the Community Operations and Development department. A roster of safety committee department representatives could then be published for employees.

10. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting of the Elk River Safety Committee was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

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Jennifer Johnson  
Recording Secretary