

Michigan Municipal Workers' Compensation Fund

Safety and Health Resource Manual

Hiring Safe Employees

Every employer should make safety a part of the hiring process. Federal and state laws require employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. Beyond that, you can increase productivity by hiring safe employees. Employees who are aware of safety issues and have a commitment to following safe work practices can reduce accidents that result in lost time. A reduction in accidents improves employee morale. When a coworker receives an injury on the job, employees can become less motivated to perform their responsibilities. However, if employees have a commitment to safety and understand that you, as their employer, want them to have a safe workplace, they feel better about their jobs. Finally, hiring for safety can also reduce an employer's exposure to liability from employees whose unsafe acts result in harm to others.

Every employer wants productive employees. But what does this mean? Certainly it means that employers want to hire and retain individuals who can perform their job responsibilities efficiently and by established deadlines. But it also means – or should mean – that they want to hire and retain individuals who are qualified for the work they will perform, who have the motivation to perform well, and who have a concern for safety. For example, if an employer is hiring a driver, he or she needs to determine, among other things, if:

- the candidates have the appropriate license(s),
- they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to drive the type(s) of vehicle for which they will be responsible,
- their past employment and/or driving record supports the hiring decision. In particular, do reference checks and motor vehicle record checks reveal safe driving habits?

If an employer is hiring a person to perform maintenance on electrical equipment, he or she would want to determine if candidates are licensed and if they are familiar with regulations such as those for the Lockout and/or Tagout of Hazardous Energy Sources.

In addition, employers must also be aware that their actions must not conflict with federal and state employment law. These laws include:

The Americans with Disabilities Act
Civil Rights Act - Title IV
Michigan Handicapper's Act

Making wrong hiring decisions can be costly. Injuries to employees cost employers millions of dollars every year in direct medical costs and wage benefits. In addition, there are the hidden costs that result from reduced motivation and productivity in the workplace as well administrative costs that an employer incurs when a worker receives an injury. Sometimes the same unsafe work habits that injure employees also injure members of the public. The employer is then faced with the additional burdens of financial loss as well as diminished public trust.

The materials that follow should help you in making safety an integral part of your hiring as well as areas of employment practices.