



# ALABAMA MUNICIPAL INSURANCE CORPORATION MUNICIPAL WORKERS COMPENSATION FUND, INC.



## Loss Control Division

### Developing a Self-Inspection Program

The purpose of developing a self-inspection program for your public entity's premises is to ensure the safety of your employees and citizens. Such a program is one of the most effective elements of any safety effort. However, you must ensure that management and employees are aware and understand that a self-inspection program is only one part of a good safety program. Inspections are only one of many activities that contribute to fire safety as well as the reduction of worker injuries and liability hazards to the public.

A comprehensive safety program should have the following elements:

- Assignment of Responsibility
- Hazard Identification through Self-Inspection
- Communication and Training
- Accident Investigation
- Work Rules and Enforcement.

The integration of the inspection program with other management functions is essential or it will fail. Because uncorrected safety hazards are a risk to the operation of your organization, it is important that a procedure exists for reporting and then correcting a hazard identified during an inspection. An effective public entity knows what works, the way it should work, and what does not work. Self-inspection programs provide an early warning system that allows management to make the changes necessary to keep things running smoothly.

Employees at all levels of the organization should participate in the self-inspection program. Management, department heads, supervisors, as well as full-time and part-time employees should receive training and have a role in it. A good program makes employees responsible for reporting hazardous conditions in their work settings. This setting may be a park and recreation department, a police department, a public works department, or an office. All employees should receive instruction on what to look for and to whom they should report hazardous condition when they observe one.

#### Types of Inspections

Self-inspections of premises should occur at various time intervals. There are many types of inspections, and you should consider all of them when developing the guidelines for your public entity's self-inspection program. A variety of persons should conduct the inspections, depending on their scope and purpose.

**Daily "Eye Ball" Inspections** – Employees should inspect their work areas at the beginning of each workday or shift. Good supervision will ensure that employees are constantly checking for unsafe actions and conditions. Management must ensure that once employees identify hazards, they report them immediately so that corrective action can take place as soon as possible. Employees are often the first to notice hazards as they evolve. You should establish a system for reporting, investigating, and evaluating the hazards that your employees report.

**Basic Conditions Inspections** – Develop and implement a regular check of the overall operations and conditions. The exposures inherent in the operations will determine whether the inspection should be weekly, monthly or quarterly. The purpose of this inspection is to verify the adequacy and effectiveness of the daily inspections. Individuals who may not normally get into the specific work area daily should conduct the inspections. Supervisors and/or department heads are excellent choices.

**Management Inspections and Audits** -The participation of top management in inspections demonstrates their sincere commitment and involvement in the public entity's safety efforts. At the management level, an audit of your operation allows an organization to verify that employees are following the policies and procedures of the self-inspection program.

**Critical Parts Inspections** – An organization may have a need to implement a routine inspection of equipment that is critical to the operation. This type of inspection is usually part of a preventive maintenance program. The inspections, performed by designated personnel, cover specific items, using established procedures, at scheduled times.

**Vehicles and Heavy Equipment Inspections** –For many employees in your public entity, the work area is the seat of the vehicles or heavy equipment that they operate. Policies and procedures should be in place so that inspections of vehicles and/or equipment takes place routinely and regularly. Employers have a legal and moral obligation to provide a safe work place for their employees. In addition, compliance with laws is essential to the continued operation of your organization.

**Outside Inspections** – Your organization's operations may involve special exposures that require specialized and costly training of your employees if they are to conduct the inspections. As an alternative, you can use outside consultants and contractors, such as health departments, license inspectors, DOT and OSHA consultants, environmental specialists, and insurance providers to conduct these types of inspections.

#### **Records and Documentation**

Good documentation and accurate records are important. They provide evidence that your public entity has implemented and continues to perform self-inspections. Checklists provide a convenient method of documenting your efforts. In addition, they guide the process, provide a means to institute corrective actions as well as a method of following up to ensure completion. You can obtain checklists from a variety of sources. These checklists are only guidelines. Ideally, you should tailor checklists to suit your organization's individual requirements and exposures. Depending upon your organizations operations, you may need several checklists that cover a variety of locations, departments, and operations. You should use checklists as an aid to the inspection process, not as ends in themselves. Management audits of the self-inspection program should include the analysis and review of the checklists to verify that they continue to be useful tools in the identification of hazards and conditions with potential for losses.

**NOTE:** This document is not intended to be legal advice. It does not identify all the issues surrounding the particular topic. Public agencies are encouraged to review their procedures with an expert or an attorney who is knowledgeable about the topic. Reliance on this information is at the sole risk of the user.