City of Stuart Public Works Department Implements Safety Incentive Program

Janine C. Wilde

A safety incentive program had long been a goal of the City of Stuart public works department. The city, which is on the Treasure Coast and has a population of nearly 16,500, queried other municipalities of similar size about their safety programs. We prepared our findings and presenting them to the citywide safety committee.

On Oct. 1, 2015, we implemented our very own safety incentive program.

Program Objective

The objective of our program is to increase safety awareness among employees, encourage and promote the use of safe work practices, and reduce the number of avoidable accidents, incidents, and injuries.

We kicked off the program by beginning a search for a unique slogan. We conducted a contest, with a gift card award of $250, which generated much participation, as well as a great deal of interest as to what the program was going to do for the safety of our valued employees. The winner of the gift card was named, and the start of the program began with the announcement of our slogan, Safety Is Priceless (S.I.P).

We wanted to award our employees for being safe, and what better way than in the form of a gift card, allowing the employees to request a card of their choice. There's an enormous value when employees have a say in their award; they consider it a real treat!

Program Structure

The structure of the program is as follows:

- All full-time employees are eligible, with the exception of department heads.
- Eligible employees must have no "avoidable" incidents or accidents, as well as work a minimum of 80 percent of their scheduled work hours.
- Each incident and accident is reviewed quarterly by five committee members consisting of staff from the public works department.
- There are four qualifying quarters each fiscal year.
- Each qualifying full-time position was categorized by risk, which was determined by reviewing the workers compensation class code rankings, job descriptions, and primary work functions of the positions, with rewards as follows:
  - High risk - $100 gift card quarterly
  - Medium risk - $50 gift card quarterly
  - Low risk - $25 gift card quarterly
- At the end of each incentive year, an employee who qualifies for all four quarters receives a day off with pay and a certificate presented at our annual awards celebration. The certificate is presented to each qualifying employee by the city manager.



Fourth annual Safety is Priceless award ceremony.

Program Results

We are currently in our fifth year of S.I.P., and although the number of incidents has had its ups and downs, we have seen a tremendous decrease in costs associated with these incidents. Not only have the property damage costs decreased, but our employee injury costs have also decreased, along with the number of "lost time" injuries. We are proud to announce that we have a success rate ranging from 85 to 94 percent quarterly!

Here are some facts about the financial impacts of our program. Prior to implementation, we had our share of injuries, with just one of them resulting in excess of $526,000, and another incident resulting in a cost of $131,000. Since the start of S.I.P., our costs associated with injuries and incidents *combined* has come in as high as $64,000 to as low as $42,000. This is a noticeable decline in costs to the city, but most importantly, we have been able to improve safety awareness within the department and how our hard-working employee's approach each task on the job.

With the success of the program, we continue to receive comments from our employees:

- "I thank the city for putting this program in place. Not only does it make me think twice, I love the extra spending money."
- "Thanks for keeping the safety program in place. No one likes to see anyone get hurt around here. I for one love it! Makes me stop and think!"
- "I appreciate the effort the city puts in to keeping us safe."

We are fortunate to have the overwhelming support of not only our department heads, but that of the city manager, human resources director, and our commissioners. We will continue the program as long as our budget allows. We feel strongly that employees are worth every bit of the effort and the small costs associated with the incentives they receive.

We want everyone to know that even a city of our size can make a difference as it relates to safety in the workplace!

Janine C. Wilde is S.I.P. coordinator with City of Stuart.