

New York State Public Entities Safety Group 497

Safety Agenda

___ Chief, Fire Department
___ Site Administrators
___ Commissioners
___ Human Resources
___ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
___ Elected Officials

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Pilot Program Reduces Costs of Health Benefits

The December issue of *American City & Council* reports on the results of a six month pilot program conducted in Garland Texas aimed at improving health and saving money on health care benefits. The program involved 30 employees who ended up losing nearly 800 pounds, improving other health problems, and saving the city nearly \$700 for each employee.

The overall objective of the project was to help employees establish healthier lifestyles. The city developed the project with the assistance of its health insurance company, its benefits consultant, and a local nurse-practitioner.

The participants first had physicals, and then met weekly at lunch to discuss eating habits, nutrition, exercise and preventive healthcare options without giving up their favorite foods. They learned strategies for eating, and they were encouraged to exercise and to drink 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.

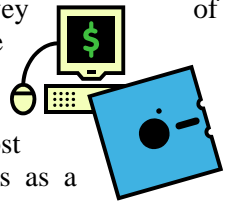
After 4 months, participants had lowered their cholesterol levels an average of 20 points and their blood pressure readings an average of 10 points. By the end of the project, several participants had reduced or eliminated diabetes or hypertension medication. The participants reported less indigestion and higher self-confidence and energy levels.

The city reports that it is saving \$358 per employee per year in medical claims, \$168 in prescription claims and \$157 in absenteeism for a total of \$683. Based on the success of the pilot program, the city has already offered two additional classes for its employees. Looks like pretty solid evidence that a wellness program can be a “win-win” proposition!

Note: A majority of the members of the International Foundation of Employee Benefits Plans who were polled recently offer wellness plans as a way to stem costs.

How Good is Your Computer Security?

The FBI reports that your chances of being a victim of some sort of computer security breach are nine out of ten. Its latest Computer Crime Survey of more than 2,000 public and private organizations also found that one-fifth of the respondents had been hit more than 20 times a year, and almost two-thirds had suffered financial loss as a result of the incursions.



The most frequently reported attacks were viruses (84%) and spy ware (80%). One in five organizations reported they had experienced port scans and network or data sabotage.

One out of five reported they had experienced 20 or more attacks.

Viruses and worms cost the most, accounting for \$12 million of the \$32 million in losses.



The attacks came from 36 different countries! The U.S. and China were the source of over half of the intrusion attempts.

Most of the respondents to the survey reported that they had installed new security updates and software following incidents. However, advanced security techniques such as biometrics and smart cards were used by only a few organizations.

Forty-four percent of the respondents reported intrusions from within their own organizations.



Computer technology is advancing at an ever growing rate. The potential political and financial costs of complacency about computer security are enormous. Strong internal controls and the help of qualified computer security specialists are in order.

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Group Manager: Professional Underwriters – 1-800-833-8822, ext. 119

Tips on the Hiring Interview

Federal and state laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of an applicant's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status or disability. If you ask a job applicant a question specifically relating to one of these characteristics, you have broken the law and are subject to being sued, as is your organization. Interviewers should keep in mind that **every question in an interview should pertain to whether the applicant is qualified to perform the job being applied for.**

Interviewers should NOT ask questions such as the following. Provide this list to all personnel who are involved in interviewing job applicants.

What is your age? How old are you? What is the date of your birth?

Are you married? Divorced?

If you are single, are you living with anyone?

How old are you?

Do you have children? If so, how many and how old are they?

Do you own or rent your home?

What church do you attend? What religion are you?

Do you have any debts?

Do you belong to any social or political groups?

How much and what kinds of insurance do you have?

Do you suffer from an illness or disability?

Have you ever had or been treated for any of these conditions or diseases.....?

Have you been hospitalized? What for?

Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist?

Have you had a major illness recently?

How many days of work did you miss last year because of illness?

Do you have any disabilities or impairments that might affect your performance in this job?

Are you taking any prescribed drugs?

Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?

Do you have a credit record? Have you ever been bankrupt?

Where were you born?

What is your hair/skin color? Height and weight?

Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim? If so, what was the nature of the claim?

Avoid the following questions with female applicants:

Do you plan to get married?

Do you intend to start a family?

What are your day care plans?

Are you comfortable supervising men?

What would you do if your husband were transferred?

Do you think you could perform the job as well as a man?

Are you likely to take time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act?

Note: If a job applicant offers information on a topic you are not allowed to ask about, drop the subject right away. It is also prudent to be mindful of small talk during the interview.

Some questions you can ask about the applicant's background:

What did you like/dislike most about your previous jobs?

Why did you leave those jobs?

Who were your supervisors?

How did they rate your performance?

When are you available for work?

What skills do you have that will fulfill the job description with or without reasonable accommodation?

Were you able to follow your previous employers' rules?

Beware of Plug-in Air Fresheners

We have a report from an insurance investigator who found that the cause of a fire which destroyed a house was a plug-in air freshener. Apparently the plastic is thin and prone to over-heating. An experienced fire official confirms that plug-in air fresheners have been a "major source of fires for some time".