IPARKS
Illinois Parks Association Risk Services

UPDATE
SUMMER 2025

NEW

ENHANCED
GRANT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

At IPARKS, we understand the importance of keeping your property as safe as possible for community visitors. We are excited to announce an amendment to one of our grant reimbursement programs that will address not only a major safety concern, but a claims issue as well. Trip hazards are one of the biggest physical issues faced by our member facilities - and we want to help with fixing them.

SWING MODIFICATION PROGRAM IS NOW...

FALL PREVENTION REPAIR PROGRAM

The list of approved expenses includes but is not limited to:

- Walking Paths
- Driveways
- Sidewalks
- Indoor Surfaces

IN THIS ISSUE:

Each IPARKS member is eligible for up to $350 in reimbursement for expenses paid to fix a slip or trip hazard. For 2025, each member can choose to either utilize the Swing Modification Program or the Fall Prevention Repair Program. In 2026, the Fall Prevention Repair Program will officially replace the Swing Modification Program. Remember to turn in your applications and receipts before October 31st!

Ensuring member properties are free from trip and fall hazards is crucial in keeping your employees and community safe. Questions? Contact your IPARKS representative at iparks@iparks.org

OUR PROMISE

Your IPARKS membership makes it easy for you to provide safe places to play, relax, and enjoy. By making safety a priority, we empower you to improve upon best practices and work in collaboration with your fellow members to protect your district, assets, and those you serve.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION
AND ACCESSIBILITY

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees and prohibits discrimination based on a disability. Accessibility refers to the design and implementation of the physical workspace, applicable technologies, and systems to accommodate the working environment for employees with disabilities.

In the continuous journey toward creating an inclusive and supportive working environment, it is vital to address and reinforce commitment to disability accommodation and accessibility within your entity. Recognizing the diverse needs of employees is not just a legal obligation, it is a moral and ethical imperative that strengthens teams and fosters a culture of understanding and respect.

RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY IN ABILITIES

Our workforce is made up of individuals with a wide range of abilities and needs. Recognizing and respecting this diversity is the first step toward creating an environment where everyone can thrive. Be committed to understanding and meeting these needs through thoughtful accommodation and support.

ACCESSIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Ensure your physical and digital environments are accessible to all employees. This includes, but is not limited to, ergonomic workstations, accessible entrances and pathways, adaptive technology, and communication tools. Continually evaluate and improve facilities and systems to meet the evolving standards of accessibility.

- Modify job duties
- Adjust work schedules
- Provide assistive technology
- Make existing facilities accessible, such as restroom fixture improvements or adding ramps
- Have the workspace furniture adjusted to accommodate a wheelchair

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Education plays a crucial role in fostering an inclusive workplace. Regular training sessions on disability awareness, inclusive communication, and accessibility best practices should be mandatory for all staff. These sessions aim to eliminate biases and barriers that can hinder the full participation of all team members. The trainings should be focused on educating all employees about the needs and challenges of individuals with disabilities.
Not all disabilities can be seen.

Employees should be able to understand:

- ADA and reasonable accommodation
- Identifying and receiving requests for accommodation
- Confidentiality
- Respectful communication practices and providing a welcoming environment

INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

From recruitment and hiring to promotions and professional development, ensure your practices do not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Instead, design them to elevate and empower every member of the team

These policies and practices help employers:

- Improve workplace culture
- Enhance employee relations
- Increase productivity
- Address legal compliance
- Increase positive employer reputation

ELECTRICAL SAFETY
IN THE WORKPLACE

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Safety should always come first in the workplace, especially with electricity. It only takes one misstep or poorly maintained system for a dangerous – and even deadly – accident to occur.

WHAT ARE ELECTRICAL HAZARDS?

Electrical hazards refer to any situation where an employee is exposed to:

- Electrical shock
- Arc flash
- Fire
- Explosion

These situations can occur if people don't follow proper safety protocols, or electrical systems are not properly designed, installed, or maintained.

COMMON ELECTRICAL ACCIDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

The Electrical Safety Foundation International reveals that **69%** of electrical workplace fatalities were in occupations unrelated to electrical work.

The most common electrical workplace accidents include:

1. Contact with overhead power lines
2. Defective tools or equipment
3. Poorly installed wiring
4. Overloaded circuits
5. Exposed electrical components
6. Inadequate grounding
7. Compromised insulation on wiring and cords
8. Wet conditions

ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR THE WORKPLACE

1. Do not allow electrical equipment to come into contact with wet areas.
2. Identify power lines that are present at your site, so you can plan accordingly.
3. Inspect cords and plugs prior to use. If you discover any defects, do not attempt to use.
4. When disconnecting equipment that is plugged in, gently pull on the plug — not the cord.
5. Do not overload power strips or "piggyback" two power strips together.
6. Stay organized. Tidy any exposed electrical cords, and ensure they are properly tucked away in an area where they cannot be stepped on/tripped over.
7. Follow lockout/tagout procedures before performing maintenance or cleaning to prevent accidents and isolate electrical energy.
8. Do not use staples to fasten a cord to an area.
9. Do not use cords to hang electrical equipment.

10. Prevent all potential for contact with a live electrical current by closing panel doors, covering exposed wires, etc.
11. Always assume electrical parts are carrying a live current. Do not use conductive tools in the area.
12. Do not use portable ladders with conductive siderails where the worker or ladder may come in contact with energized parts.
13. If you notice an electrical issue or threat, do not attempt to repair unless you have expertise.
14. In an emergency, call an expert or emergency services, so they can safely assess the situation and resolve the issue.

SPLASH PAD
BEST PRACTICES

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Splash pads are becoming increasingly popular. Other popular names for these include splash decks, spray grounds, aquatic play pads, spray parks, interactive fountains, rain decks, spray decks, spray pads, spray pools, and spray zones. Communities are implementing stand-alone splash pads, integrating them into existing pools and playgrounds, and including them in the design of new aquatic complexes. There are approximately 10,000 commercial or public splash pads in the U.S., and this number continues to grow by an estimated 5-10 percent per year.

Splash pads are a great alternative to swimming pools for several reasons. They offer a fun water experience while requiring a relatively small financial investment and are beneficial for municipalities struggling with functionally obsolete and costly swimming pools. Initial construction costs for splash pads are much less than swimming pools, and they are typically more cost-effective to operate and maintain. In addition, stand-alone splash pads do not require as many of the security features found at municipal pools, such as fencing, gates, and administration facilities.

Splash pads are discrete recreational areas that contain water-play features and are equipped with water-spraying nozzles of various kinds with little or no standing water. Splash pads offer a safe environment in which children can play without the risk of drowning. Additionally, well-designed splash pads offer universal accessibility for all types of physical abilities. Playgrounds and splash pads are used in remarkably similar ways. Children climb, run, and jump as they interact with the play features. **Approximately 20,000 injuries occur annually on pool decks, splash pads, or water parks. Most injuries occur from falling on concrete surfacing, typically treated with an abrasive coating.** The major difference between a splash pad and a dry playground is the presence of water. In other words, splash pads are simply playgrounds with the addition of water. As a result, they share some similar safety concerns.

Entities researching a splash pad should go through a detailed planning session that discusses design issues (e.g., parking, shade, signage, showers, trash, etc.). Security and safety are two major issues that must be considered when building a splash pad in your community. Monitoring of water quality and maintenance of water treatment equipment is essential. Other safety factors to consider include:

- **Proper personal protective equipment**
- **Certified and trained staff and supervision**
- **Chemical training**
- **Confined space training**
- **Eyewash stations**
- **Posted safety rules**
- **A written emergency action plan**

There are also many surfacing options to consider including:

- Fine aggregate particles added to the concrete finish
- Rubber mixed with resin applied to the concrete
- A poured-in-place rubber surface, which offers a seamless surface

There are typically two types of systems used for splash pads including potable water systems (pass-through) and recirculating systems. Potable water systems utilize the entity's drinking water, and the water is not reused. Recirculating systems use water from tanks that are filtered, sanitized, and reused repeatedly on the splash park. Although there is no standing water in these attractions, the spray water in a recirculating system will rinse contaminants down into the water holding area to be sprayed again. This type of system is often used to save water but can also increase the potential of contamination risks from water quality if the system isn't properly designed or maintained.

The cost varies based on the type of system used. Recirculating systems collect the water within a holding tank where it is treated and filtered and pumps it back out again to the spray nozzles. This system requires scheduled water monitoring and adjusting of chemicals. While it uses much less water, it is more expensive to monitor. A pass-through potable water system uses the entity's potable water and drains directly to the sanitary system and, therefore, no monitoring is required. The main cost is the potable water. Some systems collect the water and utilize it as a gray water application such as drip irrigation. **If there is no charge to the residents to use the splash pad, access control personnel are not always required. Safety concerns, in general, are lower and do not require the hiring of lifeguard personnel.**

Consult your Risk Control Specialist, Jason Johnston, with any questions you may have or to request an onsite visit.
jjohnston@iparks.org

HEAT ILLNESS PREVENTION

KNOW THE SIGNS AND WHAT TO DO

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Heat illness occurs when the body struggles to regulate its temperature and ability to cool itself down. There are several types of heat illness – from heat rash to heat stroke. Death may occur when the heat illness escalates to **heat stroke**. It is critical you recognize heat illness at its onset and take corrective action immediately. Heat illness can continue to increase in severity if not addressed immediately. It is easier to mitigate symptoms of heat rash and cramps and more difficult to resolve heat exhaustion and heat stroke, which may lead to death.

HEAT RASH

Is a skin irritation caused by sweat that is unable to evaporate from the skin showing up as pimples or red patches (usually on the neck, chest, groin, or in elbow creases).

What to do - Move to a cool, dry place and keep the rash dry. Monitor for further signs of heat illness.

HEAT CRAMPS

Extended exertion and lack of hydration in a hot environment can result in cramps, muscle pain, or spasms. These are felt most in the arms and legs and can occur after the work has stopped.

What to do - Rest in a shady, cool area. Drink cool water and consider electrolyte-rich sports drinks for rehydration. Gentle stretching and massage of the affected muscles can be helpful. Wait for cramps to go away before doing any physical activity and monitor for signs of increasing heat illness.

Get Help If

- Cramps last more than 1 hour
- You have nausea or vomiting
- You're on a low sodium diet (drink electrolyte-rich sports drinks)
- You are at risk or have a history of heart problems
- Increase in symptoms or inability to recover after attempts to rehydrate and cool down

HEAT EXHAUSTION

This is a more severe form of heat illness when the whole body becomes stressed, especially the circulatory system, by environmental and personal factors that contribute to heat illness. During this heat illness, the body has a hard time compensating for extreme loss of water and salt in the body after all mitigation efforts have failed.

Symptoms/signs include:

- **Cool, pale, clammy skin**
- **Heavy sweating**
- **Fatigue or weakness**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Headache**
- **Dizziness or fainting**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Rapid heartbeat and breathing**
- **Thirst**
- **Irritability**

What to do - If you or someone else has signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion, get out of the heat immediately. Loosen or remove clothing. Apply cool water or ice packs to the neck, armpits, and groin areas to facilitate rapid cooling. Drink water and electrolytes. **Seek medical attention immediately.**

HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is the **most serious form** and the last stage of heat illness. **This is an immediate medical emergency. Call 9-1-1.** Heat stroke is when the body has lost the ability to cool, and the body's temperature is rising toward 104° F. The increase in temperature may not be relieved by accessible cooling methods and can lead to brain damage.

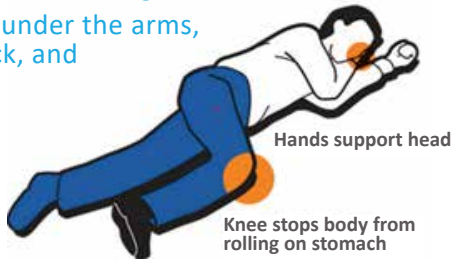
Signs may include:

- Dizziness/light headedness - headache
- Behavioral changes – confusion, disorientation, staggering
- Red, hot, dry skin – very little sweating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid pulse
- High body temperature, 105° F or higher

DEATH MAY OCCUR UNLESS TREATED PROMPTLY

WHAT TO DO - CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY

- Get the victim to a cool area and remove unnecessary clothing
- If person is unconscious, place them in a recovery position
- Apply cool water to clothing or skin
- Apply ice packs under the arms, to the neck, back, and the groin area
- Fan vigorously



IT SECURITY BEST PRACTICES

FOR PUBLIC ENTITIES

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Public entities, such as government agencies, municipalities, and public institutions, face unique cybersecurity challenges due to their handling of sensitive data and public services. To protect against cyber threats, it is essential to implement robust IT security practices. Below are key recommendations to help safeguard your organization from potential cyberattacks.

1. IMPLEMENT STRONG ACCESS CONTROLS

- ☐ Enforce multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all users, especially those with access to sensitive systems.
- ☐ Use strong, unique passwords for each account and require periodic password changes.
- ☐ Limit administrative access to only those who need it and regularly review user permissions.
- ☐ Implement role-based access control (RBAC) to restrict users from accessing data beyond their job requirements.

2. KEEP SOFTWARE AND SYSTEMS UPDATED

- ☐ Regularly apply security patches and software updates to all operating systems, applications, and firmware.
- ☐ Enable automatic updates where possible to minimize the risk of vulnerabilities.
- ☐ Replace outdated systems and software that are no longer supported by vendors.

3. SECURE NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

- ☐ Implement a firewall to monitor and control incoming and outgoing network traffic.
- ☐ Use virtual private networks (VPNs) for remote access to prevent unauthorized interception of data.
- ☐ Segment networks to separate sensitive data and systems from public or less critical areas.
- ☐ Disable unnecessary ports and servers to reduce potential entry points for attackers.

4. PROTECT AGAINST MALWARE AND RANSOMWARE

- ☐ Deploy endpoint protection software (antivirus, anti-malware) on all devices.
- ☐ Educate employees on phishing attacks and how to recognize suspicious emails or links.
- ☐ Enable email filtering to block malicious attachments and links.
- ☐ Implement a zero-trust security model, which requires continuous verification before granting access.

5. REGULARLY BACKUP CRITICAL DATA

- ☐ Maintain frequent backups of important files and systems in multiple secure locations.
- ☐ Use offline or cloud-based backup solutions that are protected from ransomware attacks.
- ☐ Test backup restoration regularly to ensure data can be recovered quickly if needed.

6. DEVELOP A STRONG CYBERSECURITY POLICY

- ☐ Establish a comprehensive IT security policy outlining acceptable use, data handling, and security requirements.
- ☐ Require regular security training for employees to stay aware of the latest threats.
- ☐ Implement an incident response plan to quickly address security breaches or cyber incidents.

7. MONITOR AND AUDIT SYSTEMS CONTINUOUSLY

- ☐ Use intrusion detection systems (IDS) and security information and event management (SIEM) tools to monitor for suspicious activity.
- ☐ Conduct regular security cyber risk and external vulnerability assessments.
- ☐ Implement log management practices to track system activity and detect anomalies.

By following these best practices, entities can significantly reduce their risk of cyberattacks and ensure the security and integrity of their IT systems. Regular training, continuous monitoring, and a proactive security strategy are key to maintaining a strong cybersecurity posture. For more cyber tips and training, visit the Zywave portal located within the online Resource eLibrary.

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IPARKS newsletters are available for viewing and printing at www.iparks.org.

SUNGLASSES OR SAFETY GLASSES:

WHICH SHOULD YOU BE WEARING?

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Many people who work outdoors often wear sunglasses on sunny days. However, it's important to note that conventional sunglasses are not safety glasses. While sunglasses can protect your eyes from glare and harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays, they do not offer adequate protection against chemicals, dust, or other hazardous materials that could enter your eyes. For such situations, it's essential to wear safety glasses.

Safety glasses are designed with stronger frames and lenses than conventional glasses. When an object strikes the lens of safety glasses, it is unlikely that the lens will dislodge. In contrast, conventional eyewear, especially those with wire frames, can shatter upon impact, sending lens shards into your eye. **This danger is real.** Approved safety glasses may break upon impact, but shards will be prevented from shattering back into the eye.

Additionally, safety glasses feature side shields that minimize the risk of foreign objects reaching the eyes from the sides, top, or bottom—something conventional sunglasses lack. While in some regions, glasses with leather side shields have become popular among skiers and are sometimes used in general situations, these glasses are not recommended for industrial use. They can severely limit peripheral vision and may even be illegal for driving in certain areas.

Furthermore, some people mistakenly believe that wearing sunglasses with darkened lenses provide sufficient protection while welding, brazing, or cutting. **This is not true.** Darkened lenses do not shield your eyes from infrared or ultraviolet radiation. In fact, wearing non-industrial dark lenses can be more dangerous than wearing no eye protection at all, as the eyes attempt to adjust to lower light by dilating the pupil, allowing more harmful radiation in. Proper eye protection during welding or cutting requires lenses with a specific shade designed for that purpose. In summary, sunglasses should not be used as welding or cutting goggles.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Conventional Sunglasses - Choose glasses that block 90 to 100 percent of UV radiation.

Safety Sunglasses - Check the packaging or frame for an ANSI designation of Z87.1, which indicates that the glasses meet safety eyewear standards.

IPARKS is the risk management affinity partner of Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), working to provide affordable, specialized coverage programs and valuable loss control resources for park districts, recreation and conservation districts, river conservancy districts, forest preserves and special recreation agencies.