

Manager's View

**A monthly e-mail message from
County Manager Tom Zdunek**

“Risky Business”

January 2013

This monthly message is often used to communicate to you my desire for county government to be more effective in what we do, more efficient in how we do it, and more responsive to the needs of those we serve. This month's message is no different—but with a twist. I want to talk about doing what we do and doing it in a safe manner.

I was recently presented a series of charts and graphs from our Risk Management Department outlining the various claims filed against the county. Many of these will turn out to be frivolous suits filed by individuals and their attorneys seeking a payout at the taxpayer's expense. Others will likely turn out to be legitimate cases wherein we failed to do the right thing; these represent citizen claims against the county. Another category includes claims filed by our own employees who report injuries in the course and scope of fulfilling their duties—Worker's Compensation claims.

Some jobs in the county are inherently more dangerous than others. A public safety worker responding to criminal behavior or putting out a fire or detaining an accused criminal or a potentially dangerous animal faces a greater chance of being injured than those of us primarily doing office work. This does not mean that those jobs cannot be performed safely, just that the potential for dangerous situations is greater. Working around heavy equipment and machinery, as many county jobs require, can also be potentially dangerous. These facts require that we exercise sound judgment and caution at all times no matter what job we perform.

As I review the data—and expense—associated with all types of claims against the county, the obvious question is: Could any of these have been prevented? I don't know that a single injury could have been prevented. What I do know is that each of us has the responsibility to be conscious of safety issues in the workplace. That means following our safety procedures like getting help lifting something heavy or wearing eye protection when needed. It also means using your own common sense and not taking shortcuts that could put you or someone else in danger. Risk Management is here to help you with this by providing training, workplace safety inspections and resources to help ensure we have a safe place to work.

It's up to all of us to make sure we work safely and not engage in “risky business” that could lead to workplace injuries. I encourage everyone to keep safety in mind as we start a new year.