

## **Bureau Reaches Out to Assist School Districts**

On Oct. 9, 2009, Governor Rendell signed House Bill 1614, which included a provision that each insured school district have and maintain a state-certified workplace safety committee. (Self-insured districts are exempt from this requirement.) Certification entitles districts to a 5 percent reduction in annual workers' compensation insurance premiums. Any district that fails to form and maintain a certified safety committee will see a funding reduction equal to the 5 percent premium reduction that could have been realized.

The timeline for submitting workplace safety committee certification applications is driven by the workers' comp policy renewal date. Most district workers' compensation policy renewals will occur on July 1, 2010.

Several key points to remember prior to submitting your application include;

- Safety committees must meet for at least six consecutive months prior to submitting an application for initial certification. If you have a July 1 workers comp policy renewal date, your committee must have been formed on or before Dec. 1, 2009, and your first formal monthly meeting should have been conducted prior to December 31, 2009.
- A quorum of regular committee members must be present for each monthly meeting.
- Committees must have a minimum of two employer and two employee representatives.
- Committee membership shall represent all primary operations of the workplace.
- All safety committee members must be trained prior to submitting an initial application and annually thereafter in three specific areas: safety committee operation; hazard detection and inspection; and accident/incident and illness prevention and investigation.
- The required training must be conducted by trainers who hold a qualification recognized by the Department of Labor & Industry. Insurance companies that write workers' compensation insurance in Pennsylvania are required to provide committee member training in these three required topics. The Bureau of PENNSAFE can also provide this training at no cost on an "as available" basis. To contact the Bureau of PENNSAFE call 717.783.2071, 1.888.SAFE.422 or e-mail [LI-pennsafe@state.pa.us](mailto:LI-pennsafe@state.pa.us).
- Committees must record and maintain membership lists, meeting agendas, attendance lists and meeting minutes.
- Initial applications must be submitted between 90 and 30 days in advance of policy renewal dates.
- For districts that have been previously certified, renewal applications must be submitted between 90 and 15 days in advance of policy renewal dates.

- There is no “grace period” for filing application deadlines. Please consider using reminders such as calendars, MS Outlook, tickler files, etc.
- File electronically by creating a “HandS” user account and submit your application online. Go to [www.dli.state.pa.us](http://www.dli.state.pa.us) then put the word “hands” into the keyword search box. On the next screen, select “Login to HandS” and create your user account.

The Bureau is working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Pennsylvania School Board Association and the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials to assist school districts in the formation of their safety committees to comply with this new legislation.

The Bureau’s Health and Safety Division was pleased to present a Webcast to assist the Department of Education in the outreach effort to school districts. For additional information about state-certified workplace safety committees, setting up a HandS user account or to speak with a representative regarding a Webcast presentation, contact the Health and Safety Division at 717.772.1635 or e-mail [RA-LI-BWC-Safety@state.pa.us](mailto:RA-LI-BWC-Safety@state.pa.us).