

Have a SAFE Holiday

BUCKET TRUCK SAFETY

Install and remove decorations with care. - p. 7

LGRMS TRANSITION

Read GMA and ACCG's announcement. - p. 4

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Proper documentation can prevent costly claims. - p. 8



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Cover photo by Doug Walker, city of Rome, Ga.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of LGRMS, ACCG, or GMA.



UPCOMING WEBINARS AND TRAINING

Safety Coordinator I & II

FULL DAY | 8:30AM-3:30PM
Feb. 24 - Cartersville, GA [»»](#)
Feb. 17 - Tifton, GA [»»](#)
Feb. 18 - Statesboro, GA [»»](#)
March 3 - Macon, GA [»»](#)

Safety Coordinator III & IV

FULL DAY | 8:30AM-3:30PM
Feb. 25 - Cartersville, GA [»»](#)
Feb. 26 - Gainesville, GA [»»](#)
March 4 - Macon, GA [»»](#)

PAST WEBINARS ON YOUTUBE

Ashley Wilson Act & First Responders PTSD Program

Oct. 16, 2025 [»»](#)

Law Enforcement Crisis Communications

Oct. 15, 2025 [»»](#)

Elected Official Crisis Communications

Oct. 7, 2025 [»»](#)

Role of the Certified Swimming Pool & Splash Pad Operator

May 22, 2025 [»»](#)

Responding to a Use of Force Incident

Jan. 24, 2024 [»»](#)

Georgia Open Records Act

Sep. 21, 2023 [»»](#)

Reasonable Suspicion-based Drug Testing

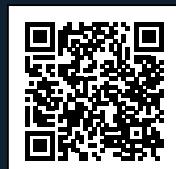
Apr. 25, 2023 [»»](#)



201 Pryor St. SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

lgrms.com  

Events subject to change.
Check website for updates.



lgrms.com/training-event-calendar.aspx



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

By Dennis Watts
Sr. Manager, Loss Control & Prevention Services



Welcome to the November/December edition of SHARE, the monthly publication of Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS). SHARE is sent to all GIRMA/IRMA, and WC, members 10 times per year around the 20th of the month. SHARE has two sections: (1) a general safety and risk, and (2) a worker safety-focused section. We cover topics and issues most relevant to local governments in Georgia. We look forward to your feedback.

If you are not currently on the distribution list to receive our monthly newsletter, it can be downloaded for free from the LGRMS website (www.lgrms.com).

In this issue

There are some big changes under way for the loss control and prevention services formerly provided by LGRMS. But rest assured that the same friendly faces are still here to serve our GMA and ACCG members.

This month's safety theme is focused on the holidays and winter weather. We hope you take a moment to look around your workplace with these best practices in mind, then talk about improvements with your team.

Vincent Scott brings us some great tips for bucket truck

safety, as we install and remove holiday decorations in our cities and counties. Thanks to the city of Rome's public information office for providing the fantastic photos of their public works department decorating downtown!

Weston Cox offers some valuable reminders for working around holiday traffic, which apply to all local government employees. And Natalie Sellers offers our law enforcement partners critical information on "stop, question, frisk" encounters that will save our members from costly civil rights violation claims.

The next issue of SHARE will be published on or about Jan. 20, 2026.

Be safe, and Happy Holidays!

Dennis

CONTACT: Dennis Watts, dwatts@lgrms.com



JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM GMA & ACCG

LGRMS TRANSITION INFORMATION

Following a joint announcement from the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and the Association County Commissioners Georgia (ACCG) regarding the dissolution of Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS), we want to provide additional clarity on how loss control and prevention services will transition and continue to support both city and county pool members who are covered under GIRMA and Irma, and the Workers Compensation coverage programs.

This transition is being conducted collaboratively by GMA and ACCG to ensure continuity of service and ongoing support for local governments across Georgia. As part of the long-term plan, both associations will establish and operate their own internal Loss Control groups designed to meet the specific needs of their respective memberships.

During the transition period, GMA Loss Control will continue providing loss control and prevention services to both GMA and ACCG members. This approach ensures that there is continuity in services while ACCG completes the process of standing up its internal Loss Control Group.

ACCG has already made meaningful progress by establishing its Law Enforcement Risk Group, marking an important milestone in the development of its internal risk management capabilities. GMA and ACCG will continue working closely together throughout this

transition to maintain consistent, high-quality service for all members.

ACCG and GMA members can expect to continue working with many of the same experienced professionals who have supported their safety and risk management efforts over the years. While organizational structures are evolving, the expertise, responsiveness, and commitment to service that members rely on will continue.

We appreciate the dedication of the LGRMS staff whose work helped build a strong foundation for these programs, and we thank our member governments for their continued trust and partnership. Additional updates will be shared as the transition progresses.

For member questions or additional information:

Georgia Municipal Association

Randy Logan, rlogan@gacities.com or 678-686-6253

Cindy Mallett, cmallett@gacities.com

Dennis Watts, dwatts@lgrms.com

Association County Commissioners Georgia

Ashley Abercrombie, aabercrombie@accg.org or 404-589-7828

Dena Stewart, dstewart@accg.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is happening with LGRMS?

LGRMS is being formally dissolved following a joint decision by GMA and ACCG who made up its governing board. Loss control and prevention services previously delivered through LGRMS are transitioning into the internal operations of each association.

Why are GMA and ACCG making this change?

Bringing loss control services in-house allows both associations to better align these programs with their missions, improve coordination, and provide tailored support to their city and county members.

Will services be interrupted during the transition?

No. There will be no interruption in loss control and prevention services for either city or county members.

Who will provide loss control services during the transition?

GMA Loss Control will continue providing services to both GMA and ACCG members during the transition period. Close coordination with ACCG ensures that both associations members will continue to receive needed Risk and Loss Control Services.

What is the long-term plan for loss control services?

Both GMA and ACCG will operate their own internal Loss Control groups once the transition is complete.

Has ACCG already begun building its internal capacity?

Yes. ACCG has established its Law Enforcement Risk Group, representing a key step toward its full internal Loss Control structure.

Will members still work with the same staff?

Yes. Members will continue working with many of the same experienced professionals who have supported their safety and risk management efforts.

How long will the transition take?

The transition is expected to continue into 2026, with updates shared as milestones are reached.

Who should members contact with questions?

- Georgia Municipal Association, Randy Logan at rlogan@gacities.com or 678-686-6253
- Association County Commissioners Georgia, Ashley Abercrombie at aabercrombie@accg.org

NOTES from the ROAD

BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFE TRAVELS

Holiday Traffic Safety for Local Government

Watch out for heavy volume on the roadways

By Weston Cox
LGRMS Risk Control Consultant

As the holiday season approaches, cities and counties experience a significant increase in traffic volume, with many out-of-town travelers passing through unfamiliar roadways. This surge in vehicles—combined with drivers who may be distracted, fatigued or navigating with GPS—creates a higher risk of motor vehicle accidents throughout our communities.

For local government employees who work in and around roadways, this increased holiday travel means heightened vigilance is essential.

Work zones become particularly vulnerable during this time of year. Public works crews, utility workers and contractors may be performing essential maintenance or emergency repairs just as traffic density peaks. Drivers unfamiliar with local detours, lane shifts or reduced-speed areas may react unpredictably, increasing the potential for near-misses or collisions. Clearly marked signage, high-visibility apparel and maintaining proper buffer zones are critical measures, but equally important is that employees stay aware of their surroundings and never assume drivers see them.

Police officers, public works teams and all employees operating city or county vehicles must adopt additional safety precautions during this period. Law enforcement officers conducting traffic stops or responding to

roadside incidents face heightened exposure to fast-moving holiday traffic. Public works and park employees driving larger equipment must anticipate sudden lane changes or erratic driving behaviors from visitors unfamiliar with the area. Even administrative staff using fleet vehicles for errands or inspections should plan for longer travel times, avoid peak-congestion hours when possible and practice defensive driving at all times.

By staying alert, using proper safety equipment and adapting to seasonal traffic realities, local government employees can help ensure a safer holiday season for themselves and the communities they serve.

Safety Checklist for Workers

- Clearly marked signage
- High-visibility apparel
- Proper buffer zones
- Mental alertness



LIABILITY BEAT

HELPING CITIES AND COUNTIES REDUCE PROPERTY AND LIABILITY RISK



BUCKET TRUCK SAFETY

Guidelines to ensure holiday decorations are installed without incident

By Vincent Scott
LGRMS Risk Control Consultant

The time of year has come when Georgia cities and counties install their holiday decorations. Installing holiday decorations often requires working at elevated heights, making bucket trucks an essential tool for many municipalities, public works crews and contractors. While these vehicles offer access and efficiency, they also pose significant hazards when used improperly. Following safe work practices will prevent injuries and ensure a smooth seasonal installation process.

Before beginning any task, operators should conduct a thorough **pre-operation inspection** of the bucket truck. This includes checking hydraulic systems for leaks, ensuring the lift controls function smoothly, verifying tires and outriggers are in good condition and confirming that required safety devices, such as fall protection anchor points, are present and secure. Any deficiencies should be corrected before work begins.

Stabilization is one of the most important aspects of bucket truck safety. Operators must park on firm, level ground and use outriggers as designed. Wheel chocks should be used when necessary to prevent movement. Once elevated, workers must wear appropriate fall protection, typically a full-body harness with a lanyard attached to the bucket's approved anchor point.

Safe operation includes **proper positioning** and communication. Workers should avoid leaning or

climbing on the bucket's edge. Loads such as decorations or tools should not exceed the rated platform capacity. A ground spotter should assist with navigation, traffic control and hazard awareness.

Finally, **weather conditions** play a major role. High winds, lightning or icy surfaces can create hazardous situations and may require postponing operations.

By following these guidelines, crews can use bucket trucks effectively and safely, ensuring holiday decorations are installed without incident and bringing holiday cheer to the community.



Photo by Doug Walker, city of Rome, Ga. The Public Works Street Department workers decorate downtown Rome in November. Header photo by iStock/Midnight Studio of holiday lights in Macon.

LAW ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

REDUCING RISK FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES



Proper Documentation Can Prevent Costly Civil Rights Violations

By Natalie Sellers
ACCG Sr. Law Enforcement Risk Consultant

In recent years, there have been numerous cases involving strip searches done by officers on the side of the road. We felt compelled to re-examine what the courts have said regarding strip searches and, in applying gentle but relentless pressure, revisit an old article that offers excellent recommendations on how to avoid becoming new case law.

The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures. Strip searches raise special considerations, as “the need for the particular search [must be balanced] against the invasion of personal rights that the search entails.” Franklin v. Lockhart, 769 F.2d 509, 510-11 (8th Cir. 1985) (alteration in original) (quoting Bell v. Wolfish, 441 U.S. 520, 559 (1979)). Such a search must be “reasonable in its scope, manner and location.” United States v. Williams, 477 F.3d 974, 975 (8th Cir. 2007). In regard to scope and manner, “evidence [of] ... touch[ing], ... prodd[ing], ... or [the use of] physical force are important considerations in weighing the level of insult to personal privacy visited upon the victim of a search.” United States v. Oyekan, 786 F.2d 832, 838 (8th Cir. 1986) (internal quotation omitted). Accordingly, searches involving “penetration or public exposure of

“ *We could lose this valuable community safety tool if law enforcement fails to act reasonably in training, policy development, supervisory control and field implementation.*

genitals” are considered more intrusive than those not involving such means. Williams, 477 F.3d at 976.

[O]fficers had not acted unreasonably in searching the suspect outdoors, declining “to adopt a bright-line rule that when a detainee has been secured, and travel to a stationhouse is possible, an on-street intimate inspection is an unconstitutional, unreasonable search.” Id. at 977.

What is the best way to report and monitor “stop, question and frisk” encounters?

Two police officers must pay a Milwaukee man more than half a million dollars for violating his civil rights by searching him without a legal reason and wrongfully arresting him, reports the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. A federal jury determined that officers did not have a

reason to stop and search the 40-year-old man outside his mother's home in 2012. With the verdict, jurors were essentially saying that Milwaukee police, like their counterparts in New York City, had used unconstitutional "stop and frisk" tactics. The officers did not have "reasonable suspicion," the lowest level of proof required for officers to search someone, in which the plaintiff had not committed a crime or posed a threat, the jury found. The jury believed the plaintiff, and they sent a message that no police officer can stop a man and put their hands on him simply because he is black in Milwaukee, said the plaintiff's lead attorney. The verdict was the first in potentially dozens of civil rights trials alleging illegal strip and cavity searches by Milwaukee police. More than 60 people have sued in connection with such searches.

Unfortunately, this case is not exclusive to Milwaukee. The NYPD's "stop, question and frisk" federal trial verdict is currently causing that agency to reevaluate its position on this tactic. This type of police encounter is also one of those that the U.S. Department of Justice typically focuses on during its "pattern and practice" investigations since 1997.

And it's not just an issue for large departments. Miami Gardens, Florida, is facing a slew of lawsuits over an enormous number of "suspicious persons" stops, primarily of persons of color. The street officers in this city have testified that these stops were the result of pressure from the command staff's demand for statistics.

For years, police officers have been conducting stops of "suspicious persons." This dates back to the U.S. Supreme Court Terry case decided in 1968. On many of these stops, officers conduct some form of "cursory search" or "frisk."

The Public Agency Training Council recently conducted a survey to determine aspects of this police practice and agency reporting requirements. In just over a weekend, PATC received 1,751 responses to this survey.

The overwhelming majority (89%) stated that their officers received training in the legal and tactical aspects of stopping individuals who appear suspicious. In reality, it probably should be 100%, as this is mandated in nearly all basic training curricula.

There was a marked drop-off; only 25.1% answered "yes" in the agencies that stated that a specific report was

89% receive training on legal/tactical aspects of stopping suspicious individuals

25% require specific reports for each encounter

16% maintain statistics about these encounters

*responses from a recent Public Agency Training Council survey

mandated for each "stop, question and frisk" encounter. Of those that did require a report, 77.7% said that this report required the officers to "specifically articulate the elements of his/her reasonable suspicion." When it came to requiring a supervisor to review and sign each report, the positive response rate was only 54.4%.

More alarming is that only 16.7% of all the agencies that responded to the survey stated they maintained statistics on these encounters.

We could lose this valuable community safety tool if law enforcement fails to act reasonably in training, policy development, supervisory control and field implementation. Consider the predicament law enforcement encountered in vehicle pursuits. The courts ultimately decided on "reasonableness." Many professional police officers, in fact, think that recent court decisions have seriously eroded the years of positive work done by law enforcement to limit or restrict pursuits. Some would contend that recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions appear to allow police pursuits with few restrictions.

If we don't take action on this issue, the U.S. Department of Justice and litigation may create an even higher standard of proof and conduct for these types of stops. That could result in some officers simply not conducting these types of community protection stops. Other officers might become so preoccupied with the legality of the stop that they will let down their guard and could lose their lives.

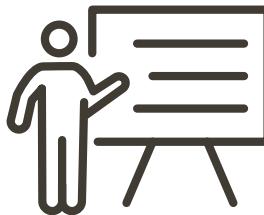
It's ironic that on Sept. 16 of this year, the DOJ announced that it was providing \$4.75 million to study five, as yet unnamed, cities. The focus would be on "racial bias ... that would collect data on stops, searches, arrests and case outcomes."

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR “STOP, QUESTION, FRISK”

So, what does this say for law enforcement? Here are a few recommendations:

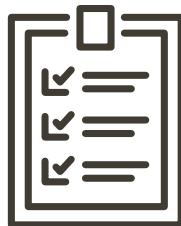
1. Review training

Most law enforcement relies on regional police academies for basic training. Each agency should evaluate the adequacy of that training and, if necessary, enhance the legal and tactical training on field interviews and stops of suspicious persons. This training must focus on preparing reports and specifically articulating “reasonable suspicion.” Ongoing in-service training is essential and can be easily accomplished by utilizing free legal updates from reputable sources, such as the Public Agency Training Council and Americans for Effective Law Enforcement.



2. Documentation

We need to expand the breadth of documentation on these types of stops. These are seizures, and we shouldn't diminish that fact. Consider what reporting we require when that stop ultimately results in a physical arrest. We need the officer to fully articulate the elements that lead to the development of “probable cause.” A stop, question and frisk should result in similar documentation. A one-page check-off report for demographic/physical description would be adequate if it also allowed sufficient room for the officer to fully articulate the specific elements of this encounter’s “reasonable suspicion.”



3. Supervision

Supervisors will be the key to the effective implementation of this new procedure. Some officers may elect to stop making these types of proactive field enforcement stops, saying it's just too much extra work. Others may try to cut corners and make up a report only when the stop results in something else. Just like



any police report, this report must be reviewed and approved by a supervisor. It will be essential that the supervisor ensures the officer articulates the proper justification, identifying the “reasonable suspicion” for the stop.

4. Quality control review

At least quarterly, the agency should conduct a quality control review by sampling these reports. This should be done by a command-level person, a representative from IA/OPS and the agency's legal adviser.



5. Data collection

Each agency should gather and evaluate the data from these stops. Focus on the ethnicity and location of these stops and make a conscious analysis of what this might demonstrate for your specific jurisdiction. We need to be proactive and be able to explain rationally when certain areas of your city are most active or when outside advocacy groups might challenge age and ethnicity.



Note: Court holdings can vary significantly between jurisdictions. As such, it is advisable to seek the advice of a local prosecutor or a legal adviser regarding questions specific to individual cases. This article is not intended to constitute legal advice in a particular case.



GA INDEPENDENT SOURCE DOCTRINE EXPLAINED

[Click here](#) to read the full article by Brian S. Batterton, J.D.
Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute



The Case

In February 2019, police in Sandy Springs, Ga. got an anonymous tip that someone had drugs in their extended stay hotel room. The tip came from housekeeping staff who reported seeing or smelling marijuana while cleaning. The next day, a narcotics investigator went to the hotel room to do a “knock and talk.” When she knocked, nobody answered, but she smelled marijuana coming from inside the room. Then officers brought in a drug-sniffing dog, which gave a positive alert at the door. Based on all this information, they got a search warrant and found marijuana, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA and over \$1,000 in the room.

Legal Challenge

The defendant, Hanks, asked the court to throw out all the evidence, arguing the police violated his Fourth Amendment rights. The trial court agreed with him, ruling that the area right outside a hotel room door is protected private space. Since the officer smelled marijuana from this protected area and then used the drug dog there, the judge said everything that followed — including the search warrant — was tainted by an illegal search.

Court’s Decision

In June 2024, the appeals court disagreed based on the “independent source doctrine.” This legal principle says that even if police gather some

evidence illegally, other evidence can still be used if it came from a completely separate, legal source. The court applied a two-part test: First, if you remove the questionable evidence (the dog sniff), is there still enough legal evidence left to justify the search warrant? Second, did the illegal evidence actually influence the officer’s decision to get the warrant?

For the first part, the court said yes — the investigator’s own detection of marijuana smell was enough by itself. She was legally allowed to be at the door (responding to a tip and doing a knock and talk), and as a trained narcotics officer, she was qualified to recognize marijuana odor. That alone gave the judge issuing the warrant sufficient reason to approve it. However, the court couldn’t answer the second part of the test based on the existing record. They needed to know: did the dog sniff actually prompt the officer to seek the warrant, or would she have gotten it anyway based just on smelling the marijuana herself.

Bottom Line

The case was sent back to the trial court to figure out whether the dog sniff actually influenced the decision to get the search warrant. If the officer would have sought the warrant based solely on smelling marijuana, then the evidence stays. If the dog sniff was the real reason she sought the warrant, then the evidence gets suppressed. This case illustrates how courts try to separate legally obtained evidence from illegally obtained evidence when both are mixed together.



Take a moment to exercise your brain and relieve stress by solving these fun safety puzzles! Answers on page 17.

WORD SEARCH

alert	civil	question
anchor	frisk	signage
bucket	holiday	stop
buffer	lights	visible

Discovery
EDUCATION

N	P	G	H	X	M	N	Q	N	K	L	H	R	B	X
H	J	K	T	R	L	O	R	K	Y	G	E	U	C	J
W	Z	D	D	Y	O	I	Y	U	Q	F	C	V	W	D
X	L	E	X	S	U	T	K	T	F	K	L	V	N	D
S	A	H	F	T	R	S	S	U	E	E	I	R	X	O
R	Q	L	O	B	C	E	B	T	V	G	A	V	J	V
P	O	T	S	L	D	U	I	W	O	Q	C	I	Y	A
Y	U	X	Q	I	I	Q	N	Y	E	E	X	S	L	M
Y	L	P	S	N	G	D	A	K	K	B	T	I	L	O
V	G	X	Z	G	Q	N	A	G	S	Y	A	B	I	H
A	L	E	R	T	C	D	A	Y	D	I	G	L	G	C
O	K	B	E	H	I	G	M	G	O	T	R	E	H	N
B	X	P	O	W	O	N	G	R	E	D	F	F	T	H
F	O	R	N	Z	T	W	T	I	U	B	A	B	S	V
F	F	V	Y	J	D	G	D	L	I	V	I	C	I	L

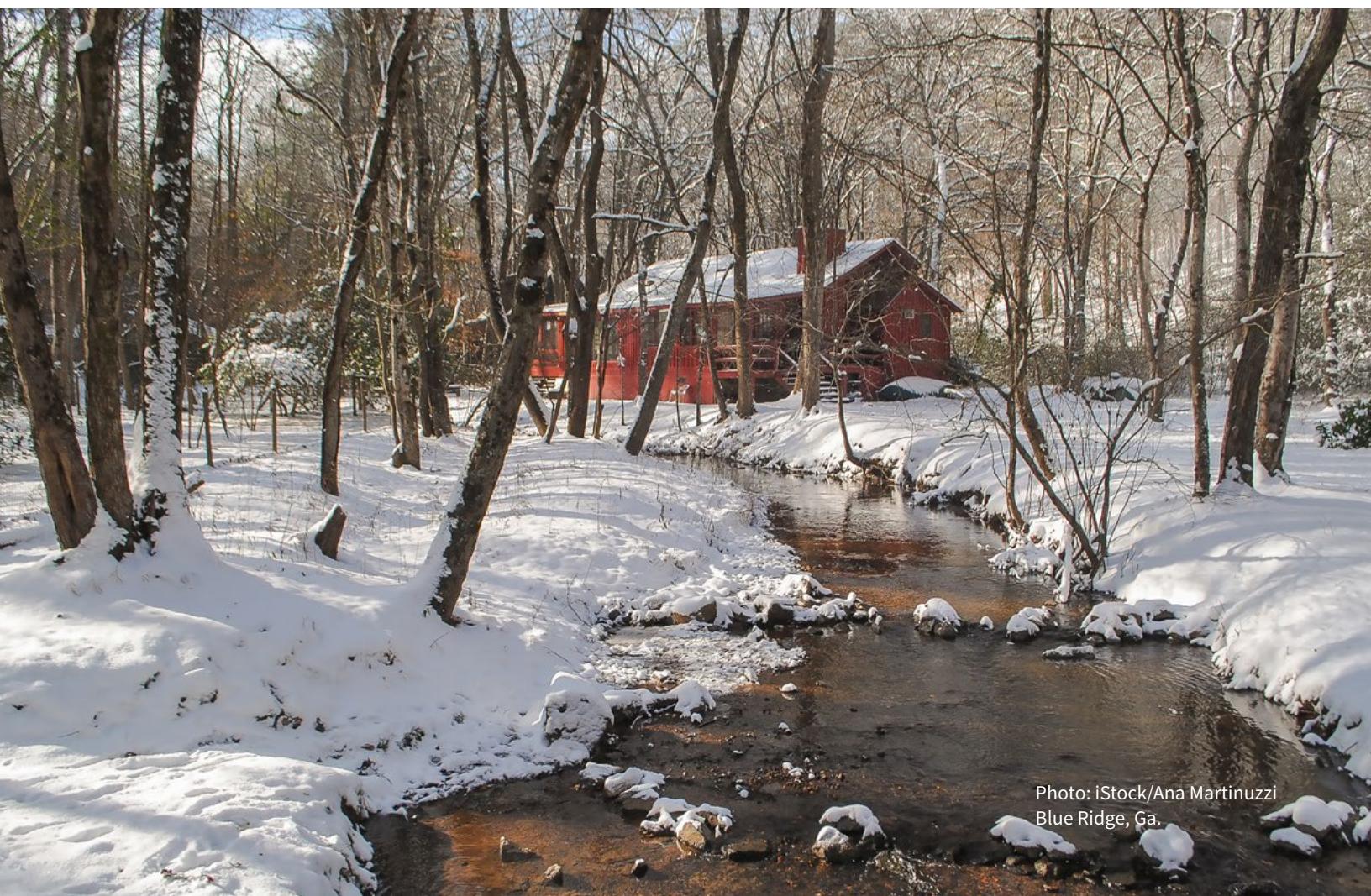


Photo: iStock/Ana Martinuzzi
Blue Ridge, Ga.



SAFETY THEME

KEEPING OUR MEMBERS SAFE ON THE JOB AND AT HOME

Holiday and Winter Safety Guidance for Georgia Local Governments

By Dennis Watts

Sr. Manager, Loss Control & Prevention Services

Holiday and Winter Season Safety for Local Governments, Employees and Facilities

During the holiday season, Georgia's city halls, county offices, public safety buildings, community centers and libraries often display festive decorations. While these create a welcoming environment for residents and staff, they also introduce seasonal hazards.

Overloaded electrical circuits, improperly hung decor or decorations placed near heat sources can increase fire risks. In local government buildings — many of which are older or heavily trafficked — it is especially important to ensure that exits, hallways and ADA-accessible routes remain clear.

Supervisors in departments such as facilities maintenance, administration and parks and recreation should confirm that all decorations meet fire code requirements and that electrical cords and lighting are in good condition.

Doing regular documented walk-through inspections during this season allows local governments to identify and correct hazards early.

Safe Setup of Decorations, Equipment and Ladders

Holiday decor is often installed and uninstalled by

maintenance crews, public works employees or event staff. Using ladders, lifts, extension cords and basic tools introduces opportunities for injury if not done properly.

Georgia local governments should reinforce ladder safety basics — maintaining three points of contact, ensuring stable footing on level ground and avoiding overreaching. Outdoor installations in parks, along downtown corridors or on municipal buildings may require additional precautions due to uneven ground or weather conditions.

Supervisors should ensure only trained personnel perform electrical hookups or elevated work. Brief, department-level safety reminders help prevent accidents and support a safe, festive environment for staff and the public.

Safety Briefings Before Holiday Events and Community Activities

Cities and counties frequently host parades, tree-lightings, festivals and employee gatherings during the holiday season. Before these events, a short safety briefing or toolbox talk can help employees refocus on safety.

Topics might include crowd management, emergency exits at event venues, safe electrical use for temporary lighting, first aid expectations, weather considerations

and vehicle/pedestrian traffic flow for public events. Even a brief reminder can significantly reduce incidents and reinforce a culture of safety within local government operations.

Emergency Preparedness and First Aid Readiness

The holiday season is an ideal time for Georgia municipalities and counties to review emergency procedures with all employees, including temporary and seasonal staff.

Employees should be familiar with building evacuation routes, muster locations and who to contact in an emergency. First aid kits in offices, public works shops and fleet facilities should be inspected and restocked, and municipalities should ensure that trained first responders are available on each shift.

Fire extinguishers, alarms and backup power systems should be checked for functionality. A well-prepared workforce responds more effectively during emergencies, protecting both staff and the community.

Winter Safety for Georgia Local Government Operations

Although Georgia winters are generally moderate, sudden temperature drops, icy conditions and occasional winter storms can create significant risks for municipal and county employees — especially those working outdoors in public works, sanitation, utilities, law enforcement and parks.

Cold Stress Prevention for Outdoor Workers

Outdoor staff may face risks of cold stress, reduced dexterity or hypothermia — particularly during early-morning shifts or winter storm response. Even office staff may encounter hazards on icy steps, sidewalks or parking lots.

Supervisors should remind employees to dress in layers, stay dry and recognize early symptoms of cold stress. Ensuring well-lit, clear pathways reduces slip-and-fall incidents at government buildings and public facilities.

Appropriate PPE, Heating Equipment and Fleet Preparation

Local governments should stock and issue winter-appropriate PPE, including thermal gloves, insulated jackets and slip-resistant footwear.

Heating equipment in fire stations, police precincts, the sheriff's office, public works shops and administrative



Photo: iStock/Dr Verner
Helen, Ga.

buildings should be inspected regularly to prevent malfunction, carbon monoxide exposure or fire hazards.

For employees who drive government vehicles, departments should ensure winter readiness — checking tires, batteries, lights and emergency supplies. During extreme cold or low-visibility conditions, public works and public safety crews should follow established protocols for safe operations.

Snow, Ice and Slip Prevention on Government Property

While major winter storms are infrequent in Georgia, ice events can occur quickly and unexpectedly.

Cities and counties should have clear procedures for snow and ice removal at public buildings, parks, sidewalks and high-traffic areas. Assigning responsibility for salting, shoveling and monitoring surfaces helps reduce injuries for both employees and residents.

Slip-resistant footwear should be encouraged, and entry mats or drying stations can help manage moisture inside municipal buildings.

Emergency Plans for Severe Weather and Power Outages

Occasional winter storms, freezing rain or power outages require local governments to review and practice their emergency response plans.

This includes communication protocols, staff roles during weather emergencies, shelter-in-place procedures for public facilities and continuity of operations planning (COOP).

Emergency supplies — flashlights, blankets, portable chargers, generators and backup radios — should be inspected and restocked. Ensuring all employees know who to contact and what steps to take helps maintain both safety and essential services during disruptive weather.

Conclusion

By tailoring holiday and winter safety practices to the specific operations of Georgia local governments, city and county leaders can significantly reduce seasonal risks for employees and the public.

Focusing on safe decor installation, effective event safety briefings, cold-weather preparedness, emergency planning and clear walkways strengthens safety culture across all departments. Proactive measures ensure uninterrupted service delivery and protect municipal workers year-round.



Photo: iStock/Amy Sparwasser
Savannah, Ga.

WINTER SAFETY TIPS

NOV/DEC 2025
ISSUE #49



Combining these precautions with ongoing training and safety reminders fosters a culture of vigilance, keeping teams safe and operations running smoothly throughout the winter season.

Reviewing Emergency Plans for Extreme Weather Events

- 💡 Extreme weather events like storms, heavy snowfall or power outages require updated and well-communicated emergency plans.
- 💻 Employers should review procedures with staff, including shelter-in-place instructions, communication protocols and business continuity measures.
- ✳️ Emergency supplies, flashlights, blankets and backup power should be checked and replenished.
- 📅 Leaders must ensure all employees know who to contact and what to do during sudden weather changes.
- ⌚ Preparation ensures safety and minimizes operational disruptions.

Reinforcing Emergency Procedures and First Aid Readiness

- 📅 The holiday season is a good time to revisit emergency response plans and ensure employees know evacuation routes and contact points.
- ⌚ First aid kits should be checked, stocked and accessible, with trained responders on each shift.
- 📅 Employers should also verify that fire extinguishers and alarms are functional.
- 👉 Reinforcing these procedures builds confidence and preparedness among staff.
- ⚡ Being proactive ensures that if an emergency arises, the team can respond quickly and effectively.

Snow and Ice Removal Procedures and Slip-Resistant Footwear

- ⚡ Clear and timely snow and ice removal is essential for preventing workplace injuries.
- 👤 Employers should assign responsibility for shoveling, salting and regularly monitoring high-traffic areas.
- ✳️ Slip-resistant footwear should be encouraged or provided to reduce falls on icy surfaces.
- 🟠 Entry mats and designated drying areas can also help manage moisture indoors.
- 📅 Consistent implementation of these measures keeps both employees and visitors safe.

PPE, Heating Equipment and Vehicle Preparation

- 👤 Work environments should be equipped with winter-appropriate PPE such as insulated gloves, thermal layers and slip-resistant shoes.
- 🔥 Heating equipment must be inspected regularly to prevent malfunctions, carbon monoxide risks or fire hazards.
- 🚗 For employees who drive for work, vehicles should be checked for tires, battery condition and emergency kits.
- 📅 Supervisors should set protocols for reduced-visibility or extreme-cold conditions.
- ✓ These precautions help maintain safe and productive operations throughout winter.



HOW TO USE THE MONTHLY SAFETY THEME

Here are some hints to help you get the safety message across to all employees each month.

Theme Poster

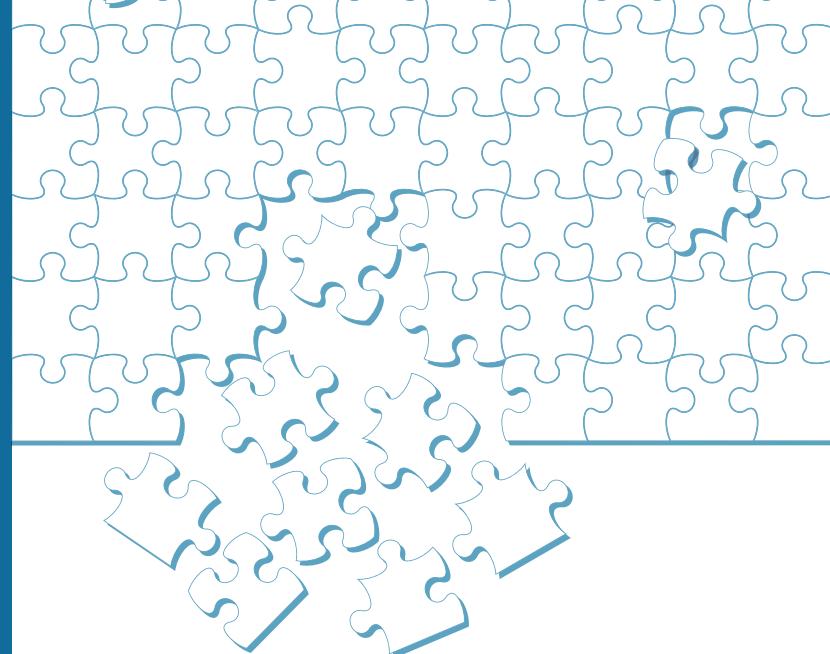
Make copies and post wherever you will get the most impact or email to your departments.

Theme Page

Repeats the poster message with the safety theme topic of the month.

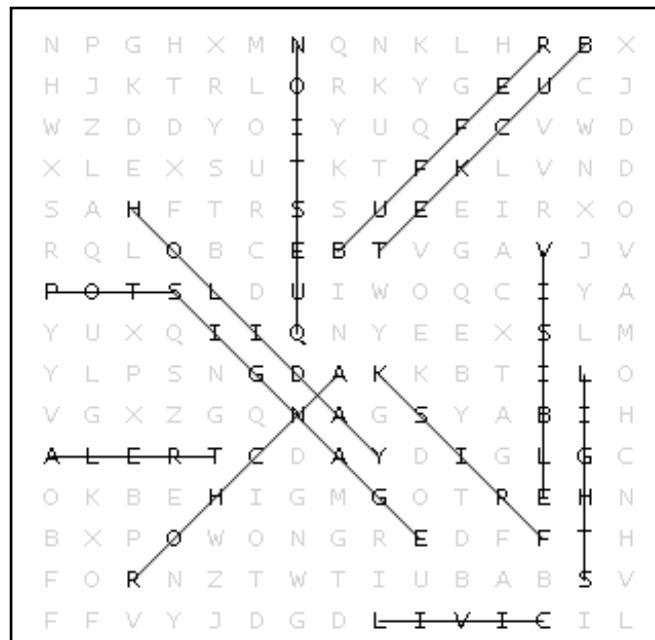
Safety Meeting Agenda

- Assemble participants.
- Hand out copy of theme page.
- Pass around Participant Sign-in Sheet.
- Read theme out loud and discuss aspects of the theme in the department. Give examples. Ask for ideas, etc.
- Discuss accidents/incidents/near misses over the last month.
- Issue safety Self-inspection Checklists for each department inspection team.
- Discuss inspection items noted from last reports and the status of completion of reported items.



PUZZLE ANSWERS

WORD SEARCH ANSWER



General Self Inspection Program

Location, Area, or Department: _____ Date: _____

Surveyor: _____

General Evaluation

	Needs Action	Needs Improvement	Good	Very Good
A. Property/Liability				
a. Fire protection	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Housekeeping	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Slip/trip/fall	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Public safety	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Employee Safety				
a. Safety meetings	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Safety rules	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Work conditions	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Auto/equipment	_____	_____	_____	_____

Property/Liability

	Yes	No
Fire protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency numbers posted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire extinguishers available/serviced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire alarm panel showing system is operational; no warning lights.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Automatic sprinkler system control valve locked in open position.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Automatic sprinkler heads clear of storage within three feet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flammable, combustible liquids stored in UL-listed containers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flammable, combustible liquid containers stored in proper cabinet or container.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoking, No Smoking areas designated/marketed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any cigarette butts noticed in No Smoking areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

Housekeeping

Stairwells clear of combustible items.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furnace, hot water heater, and electrical panel areas clear of combustible items.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work and public areas are clear of extension cords, boxes, equipment, or other tripping hazards.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floor surfaces kept clear of oils, other fluids, or water.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stored items are not leaning or improperly supported; heavy items are not up high.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

Slip/Trip/Fall

Stair treads are in good condition; not worn, damaged or loose.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handrails for all stairs/steps.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guardrails for all elevated platforms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stair handrails are in good condition; not loose or broken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floor surfaces are even, with non-slip wax if applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All rugs are held down or have non-slip backing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any holes, pits or depressions are marked with tape, barricades, or guardrails.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wet floor signs are available and used.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

General Self Inspection Program

Public Safety

	Yes	No
Public areas kept clear of storage and supplies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emergency lighting for public assembly areas in buildings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evacuation plans posted for public assembly areas in buildings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public areas have necessary warning or directional signs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Construction work has barriers, covers, and markings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street and road signs noted in good condition, clear of obstructions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sidewalks smooth and even; no holes, no raised or broken areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

Employee Safety

Safety Meetings

Held in the department.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meetings held ____ monthly ____ quarterly ____ other _____ ; documented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Different topic each time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Covers department safety rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Rules

Rules specific for this department.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rules are written, posted in the department.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reviewed with new employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Work Conditions

Employees exposed to: <input type="checkbox"/> Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Cold <input type="checkbox"/> Rain/sleet/snow <input type="checkbox"/> Use of chemicals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Noise <input type="checkbox"/> Work in confined spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Work in trenches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic <input type="checkbox"/> Blood/body fluids <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Proper personal protective equipment available

Respirators, goggles, face shields, chemical gloves, traffic vests, appropriate clothing
 Trench boxes/shoring for trenching, ear plugs/muffs, body armor (law enforcement)
 Confined space equipment, harness, air testing equipment, ventilation equipment, tripod
 Fire department turn-out gear, blood-borne pathogens kits

Personal protective equipment required to be worn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees trained on proper use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equipment properly maintained.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shop equipment has proper guards to protect from pinch or caught-between type injuries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemicals used in the department.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MSDS sheets available; employees trained on hazards, proper use, proper PPE to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

Auto and Equipment

Seat belts provided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seat belts required to be used.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drivers noted wearing seat belts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All lights working including strobe lights, turn signals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tires in good condition, tread, sidewalls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass in good condition; not cracked, broken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflective tape, signs in good condition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any periodic, documented, self-inspection of the vehicles/equipment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proper guards on mowers, other equipment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____



Safety Meeting Attendance Sign Up Sheet

City/County: _____

Date: _____

Department: _____

Topic: _____

Attendees:

Next meeting scheduled for _____

Safety Coordinator _____



CONTACTS

LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

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