

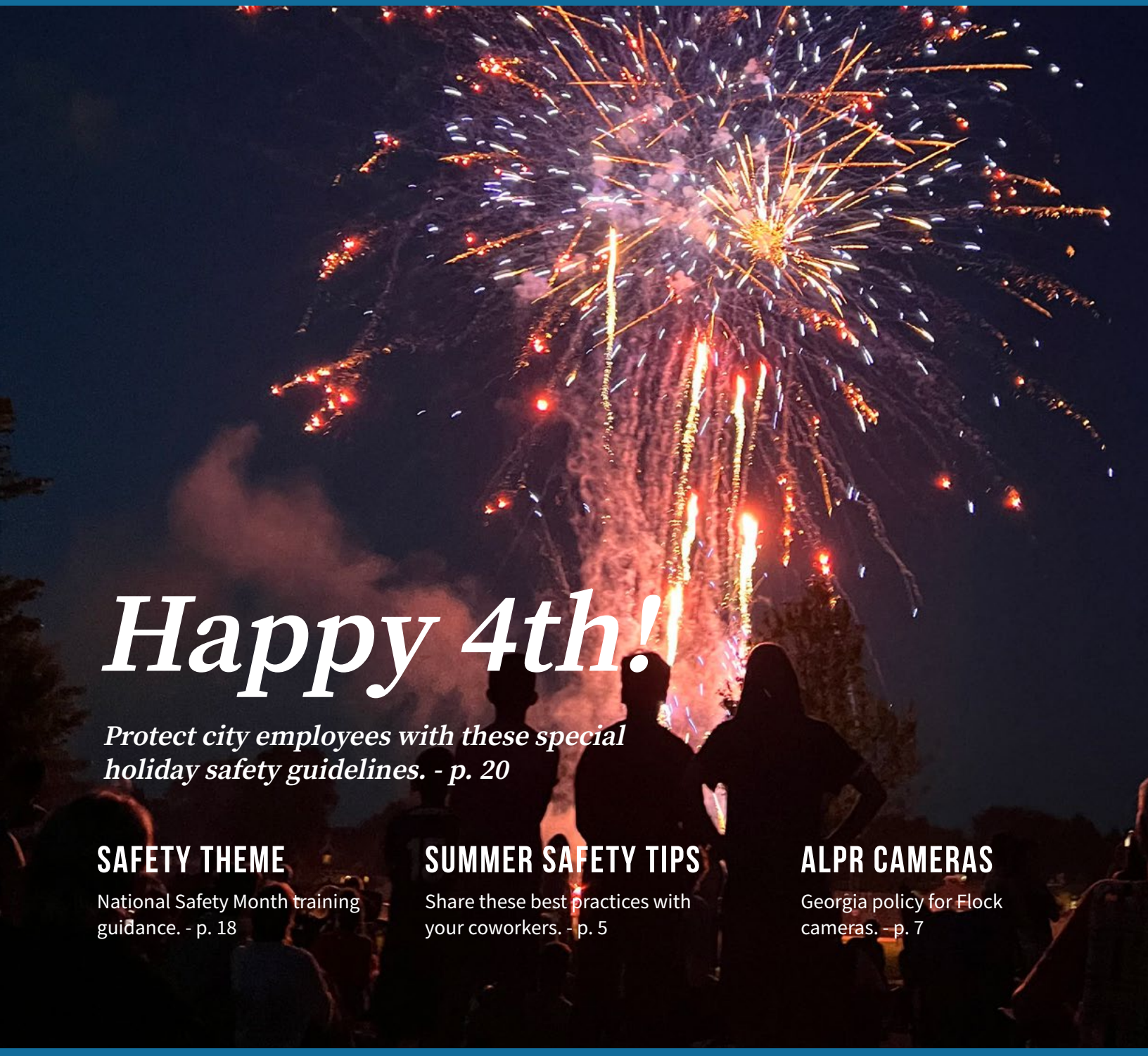


SHARE

JUNE/JULY 2026

ISSUE #2

SAFETY HEALTH AND RISK E-CONNECT NEWSLETTER

A large, vibrant display of fireworks exploding in a dark night sky. The fireworks are primarily orange, yellow, and red, with some blue and white streaks. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several people are visible, looking up at the fireworks.

Happy 4th!

Protect city employees with these special holiday safety guidelines. - p. 20

SAFETY THEME

National Safety Month training guidance. - p. 18

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Share these best practices with your coworkers. - p. 5

ALPR CAMERAS

Georgia policy for Flock cameras. -p. 7

CONTENTS

3 A Note from the Editor
Welcome to the June/July SHARE!

5 Notes from the Road
Summer Safety Tips

6 Liability Beat
Time for a Safety Check-up

7 Law Enforcement Matters
Automated License Plate Readers

16 Ring in the Fireworks!
July 4th Celebrations in History

18 Safety Theme
National Safety Month & July 4th

22 Forms
Self-Inspection, Safety Meeting

25 Staff Contacts
How to Reach Us

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



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riskcontrol.gacities.com



UPCOMING WEBINARS AND TRAINING

Contracts for Local Governments

HALF DAY | 8:30AM-12:30PM

July 22 - Macon, GA [🔗](#)

Safety Coordinator Essentials

FULL DAY | 8:30AM-3:00PM

Sept. 16 - Macon, GA [🔗](#)

General Liability

HALF DAY | 8:30AM-12:30PM

July 14 - Tifton, GA [🔗](#)

July 16 - Statesboro, GA [🔗](#)

Aug. 11 - Macon, GA [🔗](#)

Aug. 25 - Gainesville, GA [🔗](#)

Sept. 10 - Cartersville, 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 [🔗](#)

Events subject to change.
Check website for updates.



riskcontrol.gacities.com/lgrms-calendar



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



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

Welcome to the June/July edition of SHARE from GMA Risk Control. SHARE is our primary channel for communicating safety and risk topics to Georgia local government employees. Each month's Safety Theme provides a ready-made framework for holding safety meetings, documenting attendance, and meeting a core training requirement — all with minimal time and resources.

This is a special combined edition. June/July brings two important safety observances that directly affect local government employees — and we have tailgate training materials ready for both. Whether you are supervising a road crew, managing a parks department, or running a public works operation, the content in this issue gives you practical, ready-to-use resources for keeping your team safe. We also included tips for staying safe at home during the holidays.

In this issue

National Safety Month — 30th Anniversary

June is National Safety Month, and 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of this observance, established by the National Safety Council (NSC) in 1996. Three decades in, the message is the same: Most workplace injuries are preventable, and a consistent safety culture is the difference between a workforce that goes home whole

and one that doesn't.

This month's Safety Theme is organized around the four weekly themes the NSC has designated for 2026: You can use these as a focus any month of the year, not just June.

- **Week 1: Moving Safety Forward** — building a proactive safety culture by tracking leading indicators, assigning hazard owners, and stopping incidents before they happen.

- **Week 2: Staying Safe on the Roads** — vehicle and fleet safety, distracted driving, and protecting crew members working near traffic.

- **Week 3: Promoting Holistic Worker Health** — mental health, summer heat illness, and fatigue management for Georgia's outdoor workforce.

- **Week 4: Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls** — the most common cause of workplace injuries, with a focus on inspection, housekeeping and ladder safety.

The two-page theme includes expanded content and additional discussion questions ideal for longer crew meetings.

July 4th Holiday Safety Training

The July 4th Independence Day holiday weekend is one of the highest-risk periods of the year — for injuries at home, on the water, and on the road. Local government employees are not exempt: Many of your team members will be working the holiday itself, and all of them will be navigating the same elevated-risk environment the rest of the public faces.

This month's second Safety Theme gives you a complete July 4th tailgate training, covering:

- **Fireworks safety** — legal use, supervision of children, and what to do when something goes wrong.
- **Water, heat and sun safety** — boating, pool, and camping hazards during Georgia's peak summer conditions.
- **Driving and travel safety** — impaired driving risks, designated driver planning, and staying focused on holiday shifts.
- **Grilling and food safety** — safe temperature handling, fire prevention, and cross-contamination.

The two-page theme includes expanded content and additional discussion questions ideal for longer crew meetings. Run it in June to prepare your team before the long weekend or hold it the week of July 4th.

Vincent Scott has a compatible article on doing Safety Check-Ups

It serves as an excellent reminder for municipal and other local government entities to evaluate their safety programs and ensure they are taking proactive steps to protect employees, citizens, and public assets.

Weston Cox writes on some Summer Safety Tips for Supervisors/Employees

As a focus on employees and as temperatures rise in June and throughout the summer, local government employees, especially those working outdoors, face increased risks of heat-related illnesses and sun exposure.

Protecting yourself ensures you can serve the community safely and effectively.

Training Alert

Check our training calendar for upcoming Risk Management and Safety training events open to GMA members at no cost. Events include programs on liability, contracts, and worker safety fundamentals — practical sessions designed to help your local government avoid the most common and costly pitfalls.

Training calendar and registration: <https://riskcontrol.gacities.com/lgrms-calendar>

The next issue of SHARE will be published on or about July 20, 2026, and directed to GMA members. We want this newsletter to reflect the real work happening in communities across Georgia — if your department has a safety initiative, a success story, or a close call worth sharing, please reach out. Photos and accomplishments are always welcome.

Be safe.

Dennis

NOTES *from the* ROAD

BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFE TRAVELS



SUMMER SAFETY TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS AND EMPLOYEES

By Weston Cox
GMA Risk Control Consultant

As temperatures rise in June and throughout the summer, local government employees, especially those working outdoors, face increased risks of heat-related illnesses and sun exposure. Protecting yourself ensures you can serve the community safely and effectively.

By following these simple precautions, city employees can stay safe, healthy and productive throughout the summer months.

Stay Hydrated

Drink water frequently, even if you're not thirsty. Avoid sugary or caffeinated drinks that can dehydrate you.

Dress for the Heat

Wear lightweight, breathable clothing and a wide-brimmed hat. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.

Take Breaks

Schedule regular breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas to prevent overheating.

Know the Signs

Be aware of symptoms of heat exhaustion—dizziness, nausea, headache, or rapid heartbeat. Seek medical attention immediately if severe symptoms occur.

Adjust Work Schedules

When possible, perform physically demanding tasks during cooler hours, such as early morning or late afternoon.

Protect Your Eyes

Wear UV-blocking sunglasses to prevent long-term eye damage from sun exposure.

Educate and Support

Encourage colleagues to watch for one another, especially during heatwaves. Team awareness saves lives.



LIABILITY BEAT

HELPING CITIES REDUCE PROPERTY AND LIABILITY RISK



SAFETY CHECK-UP

Take advantage of National Safety Month to evaluate your safety meetings, facility inspections and trainings.

By Vincent Scott
GMA Risk Control Consultant

June is recognized as National Safety Month, an annual observance dedicated to raising awareness about workplace safety and preventing injuries and illnesses. It is an excellent reminder for local government entities to evaluate their safety programs and ensure they are taking proactive steps to protect employees, citizens and public assets. As we reach the midpoint of the year, now is the perfect time to ask a few important questions.

Has your organization conducted its quarterly safety meeting?

Regular safety meetings are one of the most effective ways to reinforce safe work practices, communicate emerging hazards, and engage employees in creating a culture of safety. Whether discussing seasonal concerns such as heat stress, distracted driving, slips and falls, or workplace ergonomics, these meetings provide valuable opportunities to keep safety at the forefront of daily operations.

Have you completed bi-annual facility inspections on all municipal properties?

Routine inspections help identify hazards before they lead to injuries, property damage or costly liability claims. Inspections should include a review of walking and working surfaces, emergency exits, fire protection

equipment, electrical systems, lighting, housekeeping practices, playgrounds, public facilities and any areas accessible to employees or the public. Documenting findings and promptly addressing deficiencies demonstrates a commitment to risk management and operational excellence.

Have you attended a GMA Risk Control Regional Training this year?

National Safety Month is also a great opportunity to invest in professional development. The recently offered Contracts for Local Government training provided valuable guidance on contract language, risk transfer, insurance requirements, and strategies for reducing liability exposure. These educational opportunities help local government officials and employees better understand the risks associated with daily operations and contractual relationships.

If you were unable to attend a recent regional training course, there is still time to enhance your knowledge and strengthen your organization's risk management efforts. Consider registering for the upcoming [General Liability Training](#), where participants will learn practical approaches to identifying liability exposures, managing public risk, and implementing best practices that help protect both employees and the community.

LAW ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

REDUCING RISK FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES



Strategic Oversight: Promoting Responsible Use of Automated License Plate Readers

By Griffin Attaberry
GMA Law Enforcement Risk Consultant

The Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute (LLRMI) has produced a sample ALPR policy tailored specifically for Georgia, setting clear standards to ensure Automated License Plate Reader technology is used appropriately, legally, and only for valid public safety purposes. This policy details procedures for capturing, storing, accessing, validating, sharing, and retaining ALPR data, emphasizing strong protections for sensitive data and compliance with GCIC/NCIC guidelines, the Georgia Open Records Act, and state retention statutes. It mandates independent verification of ALPR hits, forbids misuse—including searches for personal, political, or discriminatory reasons—and enforces rigorous access controls, regular audits, and thorough documentation of accountability.

With rules that define legitimate uses, prohibit improper actions, and require training, oversight, and vendor security, this policy (included in the following pages) ensures ALPR systems boost crime prevention, investigative capabilities, and officer safety—while reducing liability risks and safeguarding community trust.



Photo: Flock camera, ketteringOH.org



Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR)	Related Policies: Criminal Investigations; Traffic Stops; Records Retention; GCIC/NCIC; Open Records; Digital Evidence, Information Security
<i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this agency for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i>	
Applicable State Statutes: .C.G.A. Title 35, Chapter 3, Article 2 (Georgia Crime Information Center), including O.C.G.A. § 35-3-38; Georgia Open Records Act, O.C.G.A. §§ 50-18-70 through 50-18-77, including O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72; Georgia Records Act, O.C.G.A. §§ 50-18-90 through 50-18-102; applicable Georgia Archives/local government records retention schedules; and other applicable federal and state privacy, criminal justice information, and motor vehicle records laws.	
Accreditation Standard:	
Date Implemented:	Review Date:

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide Georgia-specific guidance for the lawful capture, storage, access, audit, sharing, and use of digital data obtained through Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology by this agency.

ALPR data is collected through cameras that capture an image of a vehicle license plate and use optical character recognition technology to convert plate characters into text. The system may compare plate information against lawful criminal justice or public safety data sources, including NCIC/GCIC, stolen vehicle files, missing person alerts, AMBER or Mattie's Call alerts, wanted person information, protection order information, local BOLOs, and other lawfully maintained agency hot lists. When a possible match is found, the ALPR system may generate an alert for review and validation by authorized personnel.

ALPR cameras may be mobile, fixed, trailer-mounted, or otherwise deployed as approved by the Chief of Police or designee. ALPR cameras are intended to support proactive and reactive crime prevention, criminal investigation, recovery of stolen vehicles and license plates, missing person investigations, public safety alerts, and officer safety.

ALPR cameras used under this policy shall not be used for facial recognition, speed enforcement, or general intelligence gathering unrelated to a legitimate law enforcement or public safety purpose, or personal surveillance. ALPR data shall not be sold, commercially exploited, or used for any purpose unrelated to the agency's official duties.

II. Policy:

It is the policy of this agency to use ALPR technology in a manner that supports legitimate law enforcement and public safety objectives while recognizing privacy interests and the requirements of Georgia law. All ALPR data and images gathered by or for this agency are agency records and shall be used only for official purposes.

ALPR data may contain sensitive law enforcement, investigative, location, or personally identifying information. Access, release, and retention shall be controlled in accordance with this policy, the Georgia Open Records Act, the Georgia Records Act, GCIC/NCIC rules, applicable records retention schedules, and any other applicable law or court order.

Georgia law does not require disclosure of certain law enforcement records, including records of pending investigations or prosecutions, confidential surveillance, security-sensitive information, and records protected by federal law. ALPR records connected to investigations, confidential surveillance, criminal justice information, or security-sensitive deployment information shall be reviewed by the Records Custodian, Chief of Police or designee, and legal counsel as appropriate before release.

Unless a longer retention period is required by law, court order, litigation hold, discovery obligation, pending open records request, agency-approved evidentiary need, or applicable records retention schedule, non-evidentiary ALPR detection data shall be automatically purged after thirty (30) days on a rolling basis. ALPR data that is evidence or reasonably likely to become evidence shall be downloaded, documented, and retained according to agency evidence and records retention procedures.

III. Definitions:

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR): A device or system that uses cameras and computer technology to capture images of license plates and associated vehicle information and compare them to lists of known or suspected vehicles of law enforcement or public safety interest.

ALPR Operator: A trained and authorized agency member who may access or use ALPR equipment, software, data, or alerts.

ALPR Administrator: The Chief of Police or designee responsible for overall administration, access control, training compliance, auditing, retention, and vendor coordination for the ALPR system.

Hot List: A list of license plates or vehicle identifiers associated with vehicles of lawful law enforcement or public safety interest, including NCIC/GCIC entries, stolen vehicles, stolen tags, wanted persons, missing persons, AMBER Alerts, Mattie's Call/Silver Alert-type alerts, local BOLOs, or other approved agency investigative entries.

Vehicle of Interest: A vehicle associated with stolen property, stolen license plates, missing or wanted persons, active warrants, valid protective order investigations, officer safety alerts, criminal investigations, terrorism or homeland security matters, or other legitimate law enforcement purposes.

Detection: Data obtained by an ALPR read from a vehicle or license plate visible from a public place or another place where the agency has a lawful right to be. Detection data may include plate image, plate characters, state of issue, date, time, camera location, vehicle make, model, color, and related vehicle descriptors.

Hit or Alert: A notification that an ALPR detection may match a hot list or other lawfully approved vehicle of interest. A hit is investigative information only and must be validated before enforcement action is taken.

Detection Browsing Inquiry: Any manual search, query, review, or analysis of stored ALPR detection data by an agency user.

IV. Procedure:

A. Authorization, Training, and Access

1. Only properly trained and authorized sworn officers, investigators, dispatchers, crime analysts, records personnel, or other personnel specifically approved by the Chief of Police or designee may access the ALPR system or ALPR data.
2. No agency member shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data until completing department-approved training covering this policy, permissible uses, hit validation, privacy restrictions, open records restrictions, GCIC/NCIC obligations, and audit requirements.
3. Each user must access the ALPR system through unique individual credentials. Shared credentials are prohibited. The system must be capable of logging the user, date, time, search terms, reason for access, and data accessed.
4. The ALPR Administrator shall maintain a current list of authorized users and shall promptly revoke access when a user changes assignment, separates from employment, no longer has a need for access, or violates this policy.

B. Permitted Uses

ALPR equipment and ALPR data may be used only for official law enforcement or public safety purposes. Permitted uses include:

1. Locating stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, wanted persons, missing persons, or vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts, Mattie's Call/Silver Alert-type alerts, or other public safety alerts;
2. Assisting active criminal investigations, suspect identification, vehicle identification, crime pattern analysis, and recovery of stolen property;
3. Supporting patrol operations, officer safety alerts, homeland security, terrorism-related information, and special event or critical incident security when approved by command staff;
4. Investigating vehicles connected to active warrants, protection order violations, violent crimes, property crimes, or other legitimate criminal justice matters;
5. Providing relevant evidence in a criminal, civil, administrative, or internal agency proceeding when lawfully obtained and retained;

6. Responding to lawful requests from verified law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies as permitted by this policy and applicable law.

C. Prohibited Uses

The following uses of the ALPR system, associated scan files, hot lists, or detection browsing inquiries are prohibited:

1. Personal use, curiosity searches, political use, or any use unrelated to official agency duties;
2. Harassment, intimidation, stalking, retaliation, or monitoring of any individual or group for a non-law-enforcement purpose;
3. Use based solely on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, political affiliation, protected speech, association, or any other legally protected characteristic;
4. Use for the purpose or known effect of infringing First Amendment rights, including monitoring lawful protest, worship, association, or political activity without a specific, articulable, legitimate law enforcement purpose;
5. Accessing, disclosing, or communicating criminal history record information, GCIC/NCIC information, or system security methods except as authorized by law and policy;
6. Entering a hot list entry without an approved law enforcement or public safety basis, case number, or command approval when required;
7. Releasing ALPR data to the public, private persons, vendors, media, insurers, repossession companies, civil litigants, or non-law-enforcement entities except as required or permitted by law after agency review.

D. Field Use and Hit Validation

1. An ALPR hit is not, by itself, probable cause for arrest or search. Before taking enforcement action based solely or primarily on an ALPR hit, officers shall verify the hit through dispatch, MDT, GCIC/NCIC, or another authorized source, absent exigent circumstances.
2. Before stopping or detaining a vehicle based on an ALPR hit, the officer or dispatcher shall make a reasonable effort to confirm that the observed plate characters, state of issue, and vehicle descriptors match the ALPR read and the relevant wanted entry/hot list entry.
3. When the hit relates to a person associated with a vehicle, officers shall consider whether there is a reasonable basis to believe the wanted or missing person is in or associated with the vehicle before taking enforcement action, unless another lawful basis for action exists.
4. Officers shall document ALPR-related stops, arrests, recoveries, or enforcement actions in the incident report, including the nature of the hit, the validation method, and the resulting action.

5. If the ALPR read appears inaccurate or the hot list information is stale, officers shall not take enforcement action based on the hit alone and shall notify dispatch or the ALPR Administrator as appropriate.

E. Hot Lists

1. Hot lists shall be obtained or compiled only from lawful sources consistent with the purposes of this policy, including NCIC/GCIC, state or local BOLOs, missing person alerts, and agency-approved investigative entries.
2. General hot lists shall be updated automatically or manually as often as practicable and at least once daily when the system is active, with the most current data overwriting stale data.
3. Specific agency-created hot list entries require documentation of the entering member's name, related case number, approving supervisor or ALPR Administrator when required, and a brief synopsis describing the lawful basis for the entry.
4. Specific hot list entries shall be reviewed periodically and removed promptly when the entry is no longer supported by a legitimate law enforcement or public safety need.

F. Communications Personnel

1. Dispatch or communications personnel may monitor ALPR alerts when assigned. Upon receiving an alert, dispatch personnel shall visually compare the captured plate image with the wanted/suspect plate displayed by the system.
2. For NCIC/GCIC-related hits, dispatch personnel shall verify that the entry is still active before units take enforcement action, absent exigent circumstances.
3. For stolen license plate hits, dispatch personnel should check available DMV/registration information and advise responding units whether the plate appears on a vehicle matching the make, model, color, or other descriptor.
4. Any special instructions associated with a hot list entry, such as "stop only with probable cause" or "identify occupants if lawfully stopped," shall be communicated to responding units.
5. Communications personnel shall follow NCIC/GCIC and agency protocols for confirming, clearing, canceling, or notifying entering agencies regarding recoveries and arrests.

G. Patrol and Investigative Personnel

1. Patrol personnel may monitor assigned ALPR alerts and respond to the area of a capture when appropriate. Traffic stops or contacts shall follow agency policy, constitutional standards, officer safety practices, and the validation requirements in this policy.
2. Investigative personnel may use ALPR data to identify vehicles, suspects, witnesses, investigative leads, crime patterns, or evidence connected to specific criminal investigations.

3. When ALPR data is relied on as evidence or a material investigative lead, the relevant data shall be downloaded or preserved, documented in the case report, and handled according to evidence and records procedures.
4. Investigative searches must include a case number, incident number, or clearly documented law enforcement reason for the inquiry.

H. Data Collection, Security, and Retention

1. The ALPR Administrator is responsible for ensuring that systems and processes are in place for secure collection, transfer, storage, access, retention, audit, and purge of ALPR data.
2. ALPR data shall be stored in an agency-approved, access-controlled system. Vendor systems must provide audit logs and must not permit vendor personnel or third parties to access agency data except as authorized by contract and law.
3. Non-evidentiary ALPR data shall be retained no longer than thirty (30) days unless a longer retention period is required by law, court order, litigation hold, pending open records request, discovery obligation, evidence preservation need, or applicable records retention schedule.
4. ALPR data that is evidence or reasonably likely to become evidence shall be exported before purge, associated with the relevant case number, and retained under the agency's evidence and records retention procedures.
5. Information gathered or collected by the ALPR system shall not be sold, accessed, used, or disclosed for any purpose other than legitimate law enforcement, prosecution, public safety, agency administrative, or legally required purposes.
6. All ALPR data downloaded to a mobile device, computer, MDT, removable media, or case file shall be protected from unauthorized access and handled as sensitive law enforcement information.

I. Open Records and Release of ALPR Data

1. All non-law-enforcement requests for ALPR data shall be referred to the Records Custodian or other person designated to process Georgia Open Records Act requests.
2. The agency shall review requested ALPR records for applicable exemptions, redactions, confidentiality requirements, pending investigation status, confidential surveillance concerns, security-sensitive information, personal identifying information, GCIC/NCIC restrictions, federal confidentiality requirements, and court orders.
3. ALPR data may be released to another verified law enforcement or prosecutorial agency only for an official law enforcement or prosecution purpose, or as otherwise permitted by law.
4. Requests from other agencies should be in writing or documented in the ALPR system and should include the requesting agency, requesting person, case number when available, and intended law enforcement purpose.

5. The Chief of Police, ALPR Administrator, Records Custodian, or designee shall approve external releases of ALPR data when approval is required by agency procedure.
Approved requests and releases shall be retained according to agency records procedures.
6. Requests for ALPR data by private persons or non-law-enforcement entities shall not be processed through informal channels and shall be handled only through the agency's public records, subpoena, court order, or other lawful process.

J. Accountability, Audits, and Misuse

1. The ALPR Administrator or designee shall audit ALPR use at least monthly. The audit shall review a random sample of detection browsing inquiries and any other searches selected by the auditor to determine whether each inquiry had a documented, legitimate law enforcement or public safety purpose.
2. The monthly audit shall include at least ten (10) detection browsing inquiries when that many inquiries occurred during the audit period. If fewer than ten occurred, all inquiries should be reviewed.
3. The audit shall be documented in an internal memorandum to the Chief of Police or designee. The memorandum shall identify any missing documentation, apparent misuse, data errors, corrective action, training needs, or access changes.
4. Any suspected misuse of ALPR data, GCIC/NCIC information, criminal history record information, or system credentials shall be promptly reported to the Chief of Police or designee and may result in access suspension, internal investigation, discipline, criminal investigation, or referral to another agency as appropriate.
5. Users are reminded that Georgia law imposes penalties for unauthorized requests, attempts to obtain, or disclosures of criminal history record information and for unauthorized disclosure of techniques or methods used to secure criminal justice information systems.

K. Vendor Requirements

1. Any ALPR vendor used by the agency must contractually agree that agency ALPR data remains under the control of the agency and may not be sold, mined, commercially exploited, or disclosed except as authorized by the agency and law.
2. The vendor must provide access controls, audit logs, data retention and purge functions, security safeguards, and a method for the agency to export data needed for evidence, public records processing, litigation holds, or audits.
3. Vendor sharing settings must be configured to prevent automatic broad sharing unless affirmatively approved by the Chief of Police or designee and consistent with law and policy.
4. The ALPR Administrator shall periodically review vendor settings, user access, sharing permissions, and retention settings for compliance with this policy.

V. Review:

This policy shall be reviewed at least annually by the Chief of Police or designee, Records Custodian, ALPR Administrator, and legal counsel as appropriate. The review shall consider changes in Georgia law, federal law, GCIC/NCIC rules, records retention requirements, vendor capabilities, audit findings, and operational needs.



Ring in the Fourth!

The Bell Tradition You've Probably Never Heard

Long before fireworks lit up the sky, Americans celebrated Independence Day with something far quieter (maybe)—and far more intentional.

By Dennis Watts
GMA Sr Manager Loss Control and Prevention

Here's a trivia question worth asking around the picnic table this July 4th: What did John Adams actually want Americans to do to celebrate Independence Day?

Not watch fireworks—though he did mention those. Adams wrote to his wife Abigail in 1776 that the occasion ought to be commemorated with “pomp and parade... bonfires and illuminations.” But he also envisioned something more communal and resonant: the ringing of bells.

For much of the 18th and 19th centuries, church bells and town bells were the primary voice of public celebration. On July 4, 1776, the Liberty Bell rang out from the Pennsylvania State House—though the famous story of it cracking on that exact day is largely legend. What's true is that bells were the original Independence Day soundtrack.

So When Did Fireworks Take Over?

Fireworks weren't new in 1776—they'd dazzled European courts for centuries. But they became America's go-to Independence Day spectacle gradually through the

QUICK TRIVIA

- The Liberty Bell weighs **2,080 pounds** and last rang freely in 1846.
- In 1777, the first anniversary of Independence was celebrated in Philadelphia with both **bells and bonfires** — fireworks came later.
- The U.S. spends roughly **\$2 billion** on fireworks each July 4.

19th century, fueled by civic pride, growing cities with space for public gatherings, and, eventually, the rise of commercial fireworks manufacturers. By the early 1900s, fireworks were so prevalent (and so dangerous—thousands were injured annually) that a national “Safe and Sane” movement tried to bring back quieter celebrations.

The bells never fully disappeared, though. Many churches and public buildings still ring them at 2 p.m. on July 4—the approximate hour the Declaration of Independence was adopted—as part of a tradition revived in 1963.

The “Ring Out!” Revival

In 1963, Congress passed a resolution encouraging Americans to ring bells for thirteen seconds at 2:00 PM on Independence Day—one second for each of the original colonies. The National Park Service and historical societies have promoted the practice ever



It ought to be solemnized with...bells.
—John Adams, 1776

since. The Liberty Bell itself is ceremonially tapped (it’s too cracked to ring freely) each July 4 in Philadelphia, with 13 strokes.

So this July 4th, when the fireworks boom overhead, spare a thought—or a bell tone—for the Founders’ original vision: a nation that marks its freedom not just with spectacle, but with the clear, ringing sound of something that calls people together.

Sources: Cites open source, congressional record, and Author Eric Sloans, *Our Vanishing America*, partially generated by AI.



SAFETY THEME

GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

TAILGATE SAFETY TRAINING

National Safety Month — June 2026 | Georgia Local Government Employees

June — 30th Anniversary of National Safety Month (NSC) | Estimated Time: 20-25 minutes | Two-Page Version

FACILITATOR NOTE: This two-page version provides expanded content for each of the four National Safety Council weekly themes. Use page 1 for Weeks 1 and 2, and page 2 for Weeks 3 and 4. Or run the full training as a single session. The National Safety Council has organized this observance every June since 1996 — 2026 marks its 30th anniversary.

WEEK 1: MOVING SAFETY FORWARD — Building a Proactive Safety Culture

FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE	LEADING vs. LAGGING INDICATORS
- Reactive safety waits for an accident to happen; proactive safety prevents one. - Encourage every employee to report hazards without fear of blame or discipline. - Set measurable safety goals for your department — not just 'no accidents' but specific actions. - Assign a responsible owner and a due date to every hazard flagged during inspections. - Make safety a standing agenda item at every team meeting, not an afterthought. - Celebrate near-miss reporting as a positive act — it takes courage to speak up.	- Lagging indicators count what already went wrong: recordable injuries, lost-time days. - Leading indicators count what you are doing right: inspections completed, hazards closed, training attended. - Track and share both types of indicators with your crew — transparency builds accountability. - A rising near-miss count is not bad news; it means your team is paying attention. - Review your department's injury and near-miss data quarterly and act on the trends.

DISCUSSION: What is ONE hazard in your work environment that has been flagged but not yet resolved? What is the barrier to fixing it? Who owns it? What would it take to close it out before July?

WEEK 2: STAYING SAFE ON THE ROADS — Driver, Fleet & Pedestrian Safety

FLEET & VEHICLE OPERATIONS	DISTRACTED & IMPAIRED DRIVING	PEDESTRIAN & CREW SAFETY
- Conduct a full pre-trip inspection every time you operate a department vehicle. - Report mechanical issues immediately — never assume someone else will handle it. - Check tire pressure, fluid levels, lights, and emergency equipment before departure. - Comply with all posted speed limits; slow further in work zones. - Only operate equipment you are trained and authorized to use.	- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of work-related fatalities nationally. - Never use a handheld device while driving — hands-free is not risk-free. - Fatigue impairs reaction time as severely as a blood alcohol level of 0.05%. - If you feel drowsy, pull over safely; do not push through it. - Report concerns about coworker driving behavior through proper channels.	- When working near roadways, wear high-visibility vests at all times. - Establish traffic control plans before any on-road work begins. - Make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of vehicles. - Never assume a driver has seen you — position yourself to be seen. - Conduct a roadway safety briefing with your crew before beginning any road job.

DISCUSSION: When is the last time your crew completed a fleet safety inspection training? Has anyone experienced a close call near a roadway? What made the difference between a close call and a serious injury?

NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH TRAINING — PAGE 2

WEEK 3: PROMOTING HOLISTIC WORKER HEALTH — Physical, Mental & Emotional Wellbeing

MENTAL HEALTH & STRESS	HEAT SAFETY (Summer Focus)	FATIGUE MANAGEMENT
- Mental health affects safety: anxiety, depression, and stress impair focus and judgment. - Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free, confidential support — use it. - Supervisors should check in with crew members, not just about work but about wellbeing. - A culture where employees can raise mental health concerns is a safer culture. - Watch for warning signs in coworkers: withdrawal, irritability, loss of focus.	- June through August are the highest-risk months for heat-related illness in Georgia. - Heat exhaustion signs: heavy sweating, weakness, cold clammy skin, nausea, dizziness. - Heat stroke is a medical emergency: hot dry skin, rapid pulse, confusion — call 911. - Schedule strenuous outdoor work for early morning; take shade breaks every hour. - New workers need 7-14 days to acclimatize to working in heat — do not rush this process. - Drink water before you feel thirsty — by the time you feel thirst, you may already be dehydrated.	- Fatigue is a recognized safety hazard — treat it as seriously as a slippery floor. - Signs of fatigue: difficulty focusing, slowed reaction time, irritability, micro-sleeps. - Shift workers face higher fatigue risk — establish crew norms around rest. - Do not rely on caffeine to push through dangerous fatigue during critical tasks. - If you feel dangerously fatigued, tell your supervisor — that is the right call.

DISCUSSION: Does your crew have a heat safety plan for this summer? Does everyone know the signs of heat stroke vs. heat exhaustion and how to respond? What mental health resources does your department currently offer employees?

WEEK 4: PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS — The Most Universal Workplace Hazard

COMMON CAUSES & CONDITIONS	PREVENTION PRACTICES	LADDER & ELEVATED WORK SAFETY
- Wet or slippery surfaces — rain, dew, spills, and cleaning residue. - Uneven pavement, potholes, and unmarked elevation changes outdoors. - Poor lighting in storage areas, stairwells, or around equipment. - Cluttered walkways, cords across pathways, and improperly stored materials. - Loose or improper footwear for the work surface.	- Conduct a weekly walkthrough of your workspace focused specifically on STF hazards. - Report and correct wet or slippery surfaces immediately — do not wait for someone else. - Use anti-slip mats, floor tape, and wet floor signs proactively, not just reactively. - Maintain clear, well-lit walkways — clutter is a hazard, not just an inconvenience. - Wear footwear appropriate for your specific surface (concrete, turf, wet pavement, etc.).	- Inspect every ladder before use — check rungs, feet, and locking mechanisms. - Never stand on the top two rungs of a stepladder. - Maintain three points of contact when climbing: two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand. - Position ladders at the correct angle: 1 foot out for every 4 feet of height. - Use a spotter when working at height — never work on a ladder alone in an isolated area.

DISCUSSION: Walk through your workspace mentally right now. Can you identify one slip, trip, or fall hazard that exists today? What would it take to fix it before the end of this shift?

KEY REMINDERS

- Safety is not a June priority — it is an every-day responsibility for every employee. Use this month to start ONE new safety habit that you keep all year long.
- Georgia local government employees serve the public; your safety is our community's strength.
- If you see something unsafe, say something. Your voice could save a life.

SIGN-OFF

Date: _____

Facilitator: _____

Department / Crew: _____

Attendee signatures on reverse or attached roster.



SAFETY THEME

GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

TAILGATE SAFETY TRAINING

July 4th Holiday Safety for Georgia Local Government Employees

July — Independence Day | Estimated Time: 20-25 minutes | Two-Page Version

FACILITATOR NOTE: This two-page version provides expanded content and additional discussion points. Read each section aloud, pause at discussion questions, and encourage group participation. No slides or equipment needed. The holiday weekend is one of the highest-risk periods of the year — this training covers home and workplace hazards your crew may face.

FIREWORKS SAFETY

BEFORE YOU LIGHT	DURING & AFTER
• Check local and state laws — only use fireworks legal in your county. • Purchase from a licensed retailer; avoid homemade or unlabeled devices. • Read all instructions and warnings on each firework before use. • Never allow alcohol or drug use when handling fireworks. • Choose a clear outdoor location away from structures, trees, and dry grass. • Have a charged hose or large bucket of water within arm's reach.	• Light one firework at a time; step back immediately after lighting. • Supervise children closely — sparklers burn at up to 2,000 degrees F. • Never attempt to re-light a dud — soak it in water and discard. • Wear safety glasses when handling or observing close-range fireworks. • After the show, soak all used materials in water for several hours before disposal. • Call 911 for any burn injury — do not apply butter, oil, or toothpaste.

DISCUSSION: Has anyone in your crew witnessed a fireworks-related injury or close call? What was the situation? What safety step was missed? What would you do differently?

WATER & OUTDOOR RECREATION SAFETY

BOATING & LAKE SAFETY	POOL SAFETY	CAMPING SAFETY
• Always wear a properly fitted life jacket. • Check weather before departing — turn back at signs of storms. • No alcohol while operating a boat; designate a sober skipper. • Know your companions' swim skill levels. • Follow local boating speed and safety laws.	• Designate and rotate an adult on 'lifeguard duty.' • Establish and enforce pool rules with all guests. • Ensure someone present is certified in CPR. • Keep a phone poolside for emergencies. • No running on pool decks; no diving in shallow ends.	• Prepare safe drinking water; store food in sealed containers. • Protect against insects with repellent and proper clothing. • Carry a first-aid kit with supplies for cuts and insect stings. • Know the signs of heat-related illness; rest in shade regularly. • Respect wildlife — do not feed or approach animals.

DISCUSSION: When is the last time your crew completed a heat illness or water safety refresher? Does everyone know the signs of heat exhaustion vs. heat stroke? Who is the first point of contact in an emergency?

DRIVING & TRAVEL SAFETY

HOLIDAY WEEKEND RISKS	PLAN AHEAD — BEFORE YOU GO
- The July 4th weekend consistently ranks among the deadliest driving periods in the U.S. - Impaired driving spikes significantly — be extra alert to erratic drivers around you. - Fatigue is a factor — holiday excitement and late nights impair judgment like alcohol. - Pedestrian hazards increase — families with children are frequently in roadways near events. - Construction zones may be active; slow down and follow signage especially in work zones.	- Designate a sober driver before any celebration begins — not after. - If you consume alcohol, use a rideshare app or call a friend — no exceptions. - Check your vehicle: tire pressure, fluids, lights, and fuel before traveling. - Depart early to avoid heavy traffic; budget extra travel time for the holiday. - Ensure all passengers are buckled — check child restraints before departure. - If you work on July 4th, remind yourself: holiday distraction causes real workplace accidents.

DISCUSSION: If a coworker told you they planned to drive after drinking at a July 4th gathering, what would you say? What does your department's policy say about this situation? What resources are available?

GRILLING, FOOD & WORKPLACE SAFETY

GRILLING SAFETY	FOOD SAFETY IN HEAT	ON-THE-JOB FOCUS
- Never leave a lit grill unattended — one moment is all it takes. - Keep children and pets at least 3 feet from the grill at all times. - Check propane hoses for cracks or leaks with soapy water before use. - Keep a fire extinguisher or water source nearby. - Allow coals to cool completely before disposal — never in a trash can.	- The danger zone for bacteria growth is 40-140 degrees F — do not leave food out more than 2 hours (1 hour if above 90 degrees F). - Keep raw meats on a separate platter from other foods. - Use a meat thermometer: 160 degrees F for burgers, 165 degrees F for poultry. - Pack a cooler with plenty of ice; keep it out of direct sunlight.	- Pre-holiday excitement is a leading distraction that causes accidents at work. - If your department holds a cookout, practice the same fire safety rules on-site. - Arrange transportation before alcohol is served at any work-sponsored event. - Document and report any incident or near-miss from holiday-week activities. - Return to full focus on July 5th — post-holiday fatigue is a real safety risk.

DISCUSSION: Does your department have a policy for alcohol at work-sponsored events? Do all employees know what to do if they witness an impaired coworker before or after their shift?

KEY REMINDERS

- The top causes of July 4th injuries: fireworks, alcohol, heat, and drowning. All are preventable.
- Safety planning before the holiday is far easier than emergency response during it.
- If you work the holiday weekend: stay hydrated, stay focused, report near-misses.
- Your family, coworkers, and community are counting on you to come home safe.
- Know your emergency contacts, your nearest urgent care, and how to reach 911.

SIGN-OFF

Date: _____
 Facilitator: _____
 Department / Crew: _____
 Attendee signatures on reverse or attached roster.

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

Comments: _____

Housekeeping

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

Comments: _____

Slip/Trip/Fall

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

Comments: _____

General Self Inspection Program

Public Safety

Yes No

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

Comments: _____

Employee Safety

Safety Meetings

Held in the department.	☐	☐
Meetings held ___ monthly ___ quarterly ___ other _____ ; documented	☐	☐
Different topic each time.	☐	☐
Covers department safety rules.	☐	☐

Safety Rules

Rules specific for this department.	☐	☐
Rules are written, posted in the department.	☐	☐
Reviewed with new employees.	☐	☐

Work Conditions

Employees exposed to: ___ Heat ___ Cold ___ Rain/sleet/snow ___ Use of chemicals		
___ Noise ___ Work in confined spaces ___ Work in trenches		
___ Traffic ___ Blood/body fluids ___ Other _____		

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.	☐	☐
Employees trained on proper use.	☐	☐
Equipment properly maintained.	☐	☐
Shop equipment has proper guards to protect from pinch or caught-between type injuries.	☐	☐
Chemicals used in the department.	☐	☐
MSDS sheets available; employees trained on hazards, proper use, proper PPE to use.	☐	☐

Comments: _____

Auto and Equipment

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

Comments: _____

Safety Meeting Attendance Sign Up Sheet

City/County: _____

Date: _____

Department: _____

Topic: _____

Attendees:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Next meeting scheduled for _____

Safety Coordinator _____

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LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

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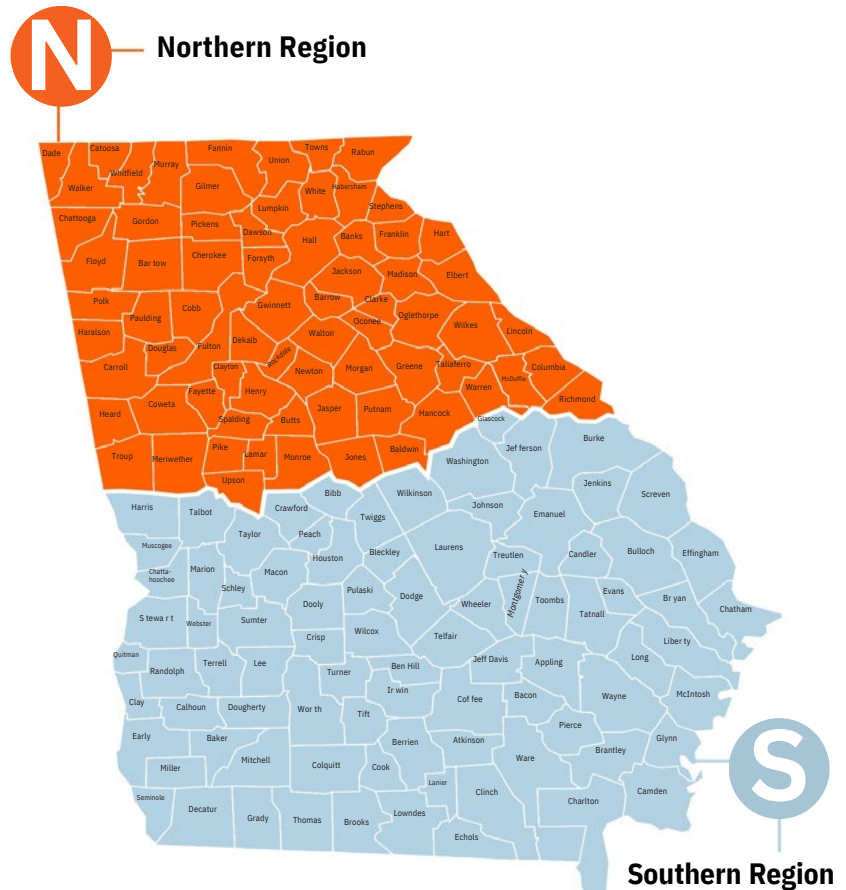
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