

Safety and Health in Nonprofits: A Wake-Up Call

Narrator: Safety and Health in Nonprofits. Safety and Health in Nonprofits: A wake-up call.

audio description: An animation depicts a figure emerging from Tinytown Food Bank.

Maria: Hi, I'm Maria, and I run the food bank here in Tinytown. I know how to feed a lot of people with a handful of staff and a lot of volunteers. Like most nonprofits, we're always crazy busy, but we love helping our community.

My wake-up call came just last month. We had wrapped up our most successful fundraiser ever and were cleaning up the rented hall. We were in a hurry because the contract said we had to be out by 10:00 PM. So while our staff members carried our stuff to their cars, one of the volunteers started mopping the floor. Well, you can guess what happened next. A staff member wearing dress shoes hit that patch of wet floor, and boom, she went down hard. The doctor said it was only a bad sprain, but every time I see her on crutches, I cringe. She's one of my most valuable employees, and she could have hit her head or broken her arm on that slippery floor. Because of her accident, I've realized that it's not just important to take care of our community, the Tinytown Food Bank has to take care of our staff and volunteers too. Here are some of the things we're doing to address safety and health in our nonprofit.

Narrator: The Safety and Health in Nonprofits Toolkit can be found in Nonprofit Association of Washington's Learning Library. The toolkit includes the Safety and Health in Nonprofits Guide, which contains activities, worksheets, and reflection questions.

Maria: Reading the Safety and Health Guide got me thinking about our culture around safety and health. We say we value safety and health, but how does that show up in our actual work? I learned that there are some management tools, like our strategic plan and budget, that can help us stay safe and healthy. I also got to thinking about the parts of our culture we don't see, like our attitudes about doing things safely. Now, I've started talking with my staff about our culture instead of leaving things unsaid. I want everyone to feel comfortable talking about this stuff and doing things the safe and healthy way.



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As I read through the guide, I found out there were legal issues to address. I just never stopped to think that my nonprofit is subject to the same labor laws as any business. One of my staff is now our safety officer, and she started holding safety meetings and making sure we had the required procedures and posters. She's writing our accident prevention plan right now too. In the guide, I found six one-page handouts that cover a lot of the work we do at the food bank. My safety officer printed out all six and posted them on our bulletin board.

I also learned about the Risk Bow Tie, and I knew I had a perfect scenario to try it out, my staffer with the sprained ankle. The Safety and Health in Nonprofits Toolkit includes a short video explaining the Risk Bow Tie, and I recommend you share it with your board. Speaking of boards, I called my board president and talked with her about what we're doing. Ultimately, the board is responsible for safety and health at the Tinytown Food Bank. She's going to add an agenda item to talk about safety and health in next month's board meeting, and she's going to show the board this video.

When I had questions, I went to the Department of Labor and Industries website. I took some specific issues I was concerned about and used their search function to learn more. I still had questions, so I called them and they suggested I schedule a free consultation. What a tremendous resource. One day, our warehouse doorbell rang, and a Labor and Industries safety consultant was there. I was nervous at first, but I shouldn't have been. He was great. He looked at our facility and asked a lot of questions. He helped us understand what we need to do to stay safe, healthy, and legally-compliant. One of the things the consultant told me is that injuries are not free. Now that I think about it, workers' compensation and all the costs of staff being out of the office get expensive really fast. I'm really proud that the Tinytown Food Bank is taking care of safety and health in our nonprofit, because we want every penny we raise to go to the Tinytown community.

Narrator: Learn more at nonprofitwa.org/learn and lni.wa.gov. This video is brought to you by Nonprofit Association of Washington. Funding and support for this project has been provided by the State of Washington, Department of Labor & Industries, Safety & Health Investment Projects.

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