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**THE INSURANCE GUIDE**  
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## Make Employee Safety a Priority This Season

By **GAMBLE CUCE**

The spring pest season is finally upon us. Businesses are also beginning to reopen amid the pandemic, meaning pest management professionals (PMPs) are about to enter their busiest stretch of the year. It's the perfect time to remember that more business means an increased number of service calls, which could potentially lead to a higher frequency of accidents.



Addressing employee safety should always be a top priority for pest control businesses. But there are a number of ways to do so without wasting time or resources.

### Remember the Basics

Simply reviewing basic safety measures with your team is one of the easiest ways to ensure they are protected on the job. Take personal protective equipment (PPE), for example: Go over what is needed to be worn, and how, when and where – as directed by both company policies and what is recommended on product labels.

Although sanitation standards were already in place for PMPs, the COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer to how pest control is performed, especially when entering a client's home. In addition to the use of PPE, now technicians must remember to wash their hands as frequently as possible; limit exposure to clients; and use face coverings in any direct interactions with clients.

Review of the proper use of certain safety equipment also should be a priority. For example, for bird control or other services that require the use of a ladder or scissor lift to access areas high off the ground, such as chimneys, roofs or trees: All technicians must receive initial training for operating this equipment, and then be given ongoing training to ensure they're using it properly at all times. This equipment, along with any other equipment being used should be frequently checked to ensure it's in good working order and safe to use.

### Plan Ahead

Another simple safety measure PMPs should strive for is to provide adequate planning time ahead of any unusual services being provided, such as renting a lift, subcontracting with other companies, etc. Technicians involved with such projects

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should be briefed on the work and precautions that likely will be required before heading to the job. This preparation allows them to understand the hazards, if any, of the site they'll be going to and will help them become more aware of their surroundings.

This is good practice for even more routine services, such as a bed bug heat treatment, for example. A prepared technician should be aware of any pets or existing exposures that could potentially lead to an accident. Additionally, the technician should be able to brief the homeowners beforehand, to ensure they are also aware of what to expect for the treatment and so they can provide any useful details the technician needs to know about the property to keep all parties involved safe.

## **Fleet Safety**

Did you know April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month? Year after year, statistics show that distracted driving is becoming more dangerous, with the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) reporting more than 3,000 deaths in 2019 caused by the issue. During the busy season, there will be a large number of technicians on the road, which means promoting safe driving practices should be a priority with your team.

Aside from the resources available through the [National Safety Council](#) for Distracted Driving Awareness Month, pest control businesses and their fleet managers have a number of ways to help keep technicians safe on the road. It starts with reviewing motor vehicle records (MVRs) of both current and prospective employees, to get an understanding of their driving behaviors.

After MVRs have been reviewed, technicians should have their driving behavior monitored on a continuous basis. This can be accomplished through any of the numerous types of technology available to do so, including on-board cameras, GPS tracking and other telematics devices. Not only does this give your fleet manager the ability to critique distracted or unsafe driving practices, but also the opportunity to educate and train employees on how to be safer on the road.

## **Training is Paramount**

As with all businesses, creating a safer pest management work environment requires continual training and education. Review and update training standards annually, and require a refresher course on training and best practices at least once a year. Going even further, offering safety seminars with an instructor who is certified by the [Occupational Safety & Health Administration](#) is a great way to improve employee safety; these sessions can even be conducted online.

Employee safety is the most important part of any business. Keeping your team safe by providing the education, training and resources they need to stay vigilant both on the road and on-site when providing services will reduce the frequency of accidents – and keep your business heading in the right direction during the busiest time of the year.

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