



A Newsletter For West Virginia State Government Employees

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## Insurance Comm. Converts to New WC Classification System

*Contributed by Deborah K. Zegeer of the West Virginia Insurance Commission.*

In January 2005, the West Virginia Legislature passed legislation proposed by Governor Joe Manchin that made sweeping changes to the way employers will obtain workers' compensation coverage for their employees in the future. Although currently there is only one company authorized to write workers' compensation insurance in the State, the legislation opens the insurance market to all private carriers licensed to do business in West Virginia on July 1, 2008. **To help facilitate this new era and let employers know that West Virginia is in fact "Open for Business," the West Virginia Insurance Commission is proud to announce conversion to the National Council Compensation Insurance, Inc., (NCCI) classification system for workers' compensation.**

NCCI is the oldest and largest provider of workers' compensation and employee injury data and statistics in the nation. NCCI is currently operating in 37 states providing various levels of service and products.

Prior to July 1, 1982, the former Workers' Compensation Fund used 45 governing classes. During Fiscal Year 1983, 62 governing classifications were used; 91 classifications were used in Fiscal Year 1984; and the current classification system provides for 94 industry codes and related rates. There are 574 national classifications; however, the forthcoming NCCI class system that was implemented on July 1, 2006, will provide over 450 classes, 6

of which are West Virginia specific. This change will involve over 42,000 employers domiciled both within and outside of State boundaries.

Why the change? Utilizing the NCCI classification system will result in consistency with national standards. The NCCI classification system provides a larger diversity of classifications that are more uniform with our bordering states. Research and development of existing and new classifications is ongoing by NCCI to insure that the most current information is included in the classification definitions. This will prove invaluable when West Virginia opens the workers' compensation insurance market to private carriers in July 2008. It will be much easier for employers to shop and compare coverage and services. The additional industry class codes will more accurately reflect the activities of a business, allowing for more precise loss costs that are applicable only to the specific industry.

Also included in the project is the Proof of Coverage program, or POC. POC is a NCCI program designed to provide the Insurance Commission with access to a database to verify that employers have workers' compensation coverage as required by law. West Virginia's POC database will include self-insured and exempt employers, the first in the nation to include both of these. The Coverage Validation System, or CVS, will be

## WV to Host National Governors Association Seminar in November

Earlier this month, Governor Joe Manchin excitedly announced that West Virginia has been chosen to host the National Governors Association (NGA) Seminar at The Greenbrier on November 17-19, 2006.

The Seminar is an opportunity for newly elected governors to meet incumbent governors. The program highlights areas such as transition into office, staff selection, identifying and articulating a message, and a myriad of other relevant topics. The incumbent governors serve as seminar faculty.

**NGA Chair, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, feels the seminar is a chance for veteran governors to meet new colleagues and share experiences. She adds, "NGA allows governors to work together to best serve our states."**

**Manchin agrees, and also expresses the event's importance to the State. "Hosting this national event gives West Virginia an opportunity to showcase the great strides we are making in the realm of economic development, healthcare, and education ..."**

The Seminar is held every two years, and this is the second consecutive year that West Virginia has been chosen as the site. The last one was hosted by former Governor Bob Wise in 2004 and also held at The Greenbrier.

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# WVU Master of Legal Studies Goes Online!

Contributed by Pam Cutright of the West Virginia University Extended Learning Program.

In response to increasing demand for Internet-delivered studies, West Virginia University (WVU) now offers its Master of Legal Studies (MLS) degree program online.

As an interdisciplinary degree program in which broad-based legal knowledge is applied to problem solving, decision making, and other challenging workplace responsibilities, the WVU MLS can help professionals who work with, but not in, the legal system to perform their jobs more effectively and further their career and personal goals.

Those for whom the Master of Legal Studies program was created include:

-  Human resources, training, labor relations, and other professionals who employ and train workers
-  Legal assistants and paralegals who carry out such preparatory legal tasks as investigation, analysis, information management, and report writing
-  Mid-level administrative professionals responsible for developing departmental plans, setting goals and deadlines, implementing improvement procedures, and supervising the work of others
-  Judicial and court workers and others whose primary role is to ensure a fairly administered legal process to all involved parties



The MLS degree program consists of twelve three-credit courses, seven of which are required of all candidates, and five of which are electives chosen in consultation with the academic advisor.

Required courses include *Law and the Legal System*, *Researching the Law*, *Alternative Dispute Resolution*, *Administrative Legal Process*, *Law and Society*, and *Legislative Process*. Also required near the conclusion of course work is the Research Capstone, which is a guided written research project in which the degree candidate applies the knowledge gained across all courses.

Elective course examples are *Commerce and Law*, *Constitutional Law*, *Criminal Law and Procedure*, *Employment Law*, *Family Law*, *Finance and Law*, and *Media and Law*.

MLS courses are taught by West Virginia University faculty from the Departments of Political Science, Public Administration, and Law, and by attorneys with expertise in relevant areas of law.

Offered on a part-time basis, courses leading toward the Master of Legal Studies degree are scheduled two to a term and back-to-back so that all learning experiences in course one are completed before going on to those in course two.

The MLS is a program of distinction. It earned the “2001 Award for Excellence” for credit programs, Mid-Atlantic Region, University Continuing Education Association for its origin in expressed needs, direct workplace application, and interdisciplinary applied curriculum. The MLS also achieved exceptional success in student satisfaction as revealed below via an alumni survey.

“Completion of the MLS gave me the credentials to be considered for

## State Employees' Retirement Seminar Available on DVD/video

Contributed by Lori Fitzgerald and Susan Hayden of the West Virginia Library Commission (WVLC), and Cindy Garrett of the State Treasurer's Office.

Whether you are nearing retirement within the next few years or you have many years to go, State Employees won't want to miss another chance to see the *Retirement Issues for State Employees* seminar offered by the West Virginia State Treasurer's Office. Featured speakers Kerry Jones of the WV Consolidated Public Retirement Board and Robert Jefferies of the Social Security Administration guide State employees through the necessary steps in preparing for the future.

Filmed by West Virginia Library Television Network at the live event, the *Retirement Issues for State Employees* seminar is now available on DVD and video. If you were unable to attend the seminar, visit the West Virginia Library Commission reading room and use your WVLC library card to borrow a copy of this information packed DVD or video. **To register for the WVLC library card, one must be a minimum of 15 years of age, a West Virginia resident, and have a valid photo ID with a current mailing address. Please note: State employee ID cards cannot be used.**

The Library Commission is located on the left side of the Cultural Center's Great Hall. It is open Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM. For more information, contact the WVLC reference desk at 558-2045.

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# State Police Offer Tips on Child Safety and Awareness

The West Virginia State Police is continually concerned with child safety. They stress that prevention starts at home. The following tips to educate children on safety and awareness are adapted and edited from a press release issued by the State Police ([www.wvstatepolice.com/news/americasnight.htm](http://www.wvstatepolice.com/news/americasnight.htm)).

## CHILDREN SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO:

- Know their full names, as well as your name, address and telephone number, including area code. Children should know how to use the telephone.
- Never say they're alone when answering the phone - instead, offer to take a message and say their parents will return the call shortly.
- Never answer the door if they are alone, and never invite anyone in the house without the permission of a parent or babysitter.
- Never take candy or gifts from strangers or anyone else without asking a parent first, and move away from cars that pull up beside them if they do not know the driver.
- Know and understand that no one should touch any part of his or her body that a bathing suit would cover, and to tell you if someone has asked them to keep a secret of any kind from you.
- Never play in deserted buildings or isolated areas, and avoid shortcuts through empty parks, fields, laneways, or alleys.
- Run home or go to the nearest public place if they are being followed and yell for help.
- Give up money, jewelry, or clothing rather than fight.
- Tell you where they are at all times or leave a message at home; let them know they can talk to you and call you to pick them up at any time.

## PARENTS SHOULD:

- Avoid clothing, toys, backpacks, and other items with your child's name on them. A child is less likely to fear someone who knows his/her name.
- Check out all potential babysitters and older friends of your child.
- Become acquainted with your child's friends and their families.
- Never leave your child alone in a public place, stroller, or car, even for a minute.
- Always accompany young children to the bathroom in public places.
- Always accompany your child on door-to-door activities.
- Point out safe houses with the Block Parent sign where children can go if they are in trouble.
- Create an environment where a child feels safe to talk to you. Let him/her know that you are interested and sensitive to their fears.
- Teach children that the police are their friends and that they can rely on them if they are in trouble.
- Keep an up-to-date color photograph of your child, as well as a medical and dental history, and have your child fingerprinted.
- Stay involved in your child's life by communicating daily to prevent your child from running away.

**Call your local West Virginia State Police Detachment if you need more information.**

## Did You Know ...

In the early 1920's, the primary mode of transportation for West Virginia State Troopers was horses.



Photo reprinted from the West Virginia State Police website ([www.wvstatepolice.com/training/archives/graphics/A-016.jpg](http://www.wvstatepolice.com/training/archives/graphics/A-016.jpg)).

## HELP AVAILABLE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

If you or someone you know has been the unfortunate victim of a crime, support is available. The Division of Criminal Justice Services (CJS) has published the Crime Victim Service Provider Directory which provides a list of local and national service and support agencies by county. You can access the directory online at [www.wvdcjs.com/justiceprograms/vocal/2006VSPDirectory.pdf](http://www.wvdcjs.com/justiceprograms/vocal/2006VSPDirectory.pdf) or contact CJS at 558-8814 or [info@wvdcjs.org](mailto:info@wvdcjs.org).





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a part of POC, and will allow outside parties such as other State agencies to view to verify coverage; however, the Insurance Commission will control access to and security of the CVS.

NCCI also has a dispute resolution process that West Virginia plans to implement. This process is for disputes between carriers and employers. NCCI currently settles approximately 80% of the disputes prior to appeals being filed. Disputes settled by NCCI are less time consuming, and therefore, less expensive to the employer.

NCCI will provide the basic manual for workers' compensation, as well as the statistical manual this year. The NCCI experience rating manual will be adopted July 1, 2007. These manuals will contain all employer, claimant, claim, and medical data needed to develop the loss costs and experience modification factors for West Virginia employers. The Insurance Commission has been working very closely with NCCI and other parties to insure the integrity of the data.

In preparation for the NCCI classification conversion, Insurance Commission staff is currently in training that will continue throughout the year. The Insurance Commission also hosted NCCI information meetings in eight West Virginia cities throughout the month of April.

**In summary, the NCCI classification conversation project is a positive move for the State and its employers. It will help show the world that West Virginia is "Open for Business."**

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a supervisory position that would advance me within my agency. I've applied for, and think I have a good chance to win, this promotion." (Agency Investigator)

"I have worked in the legal field for 25 years and never expected I could benefit so much from any academic program. I can read and understand cases far more effectively now." (Legal Assistant)

"The Capstone Project offered me opportunity to study a problem I face at work – compliance with disability anti-discrimination laws. Having conducted considerable research in that subject I am now the most knowledgeable person in the agency in that issue – even more so than any attorney on staff." (Human Resources Manager)

"First, I am more competitive. I've just interviewed for a new and better position in my organization. Secondly, I've received compliments on the improvements in my research and writing." (Probation Officer)

"I became a legal assistant in a law office after a long career in health care, and until the MLS came along, I was self-taught. Through the course, *Alternative Dispute Resolution*, I was introduced to mediation, subsequently took training to become certified in mediation by the State Supreme Court, and today regularly mediate family disputes." (Legal Assistant)

"I work with and in many areas of the law – with legislators, law-enforcement officers, and attorneys. My work relates to government operations, results of court cases, federal, state, and local laws, and their impact generally. The MLS tied together my job skills to increase my professional credibility in these situations." (Nonprofit Organization Administrator)

Applications for the January 2007 cohort are now being accepted. For more information or the application packet, contact Loretta Hoover at 304-293-2614 or [loretta.hoover@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:loretta.hoover@mail.wvu.edu).

## Pencil In ...



Get up and get active – join the **Statehouse Mixed Bowling League!** There's room for two five-person teams. You must have at least 2 women per team. Individuals welcome too. The league bowls at 6 PM on Monday nights at Venture Lanes in St. Albans. For more, contact Bob Blosser, League President: 558-9724 or e-mail [bblosser@dot.state.wv.us](mailto:bblosser@dot.state.wv.us).

If you're interested in public human resource administration, the **West Virginia Chapter of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources** might be for you. Meetings are typically held the fourth Thursday of each month at locations within a few minutes of the Capitol Complex. Anyone interested can find more information at [www.wvipma-hr.org](http://www.wvipma-hr.org).

**As long as you're going to be thinking anyway, THINK BIG!**

*Donald Trump*

