

## Project Name: Public Works and Utilities’ Safety and Claims Management

July 31, 2019

### Status Code Legend

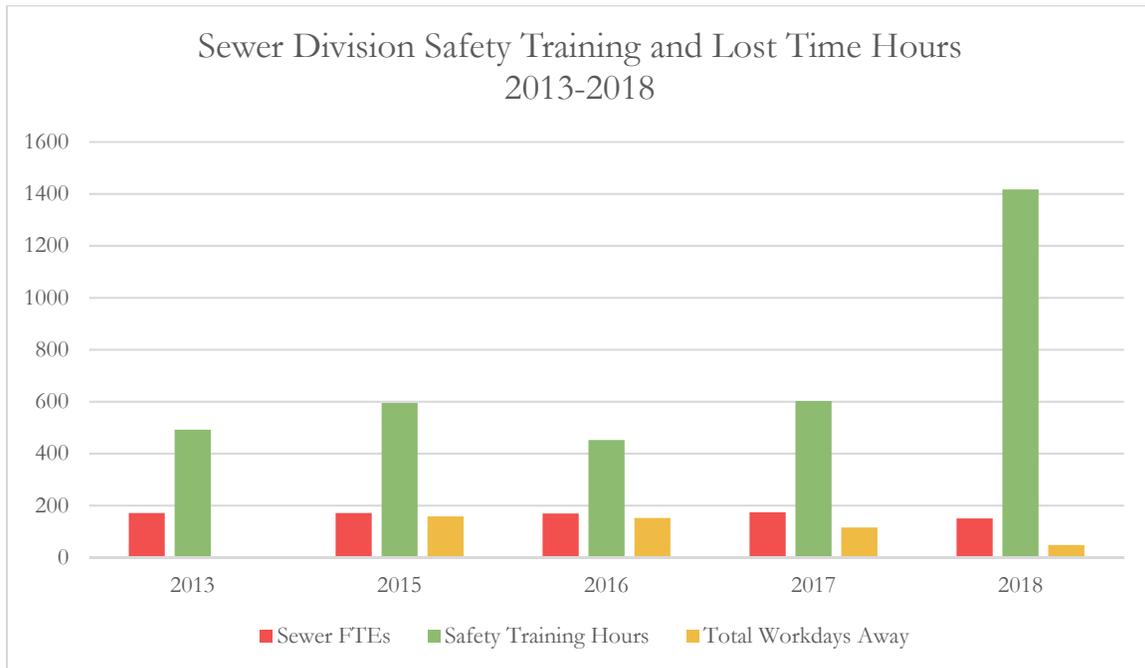
- Implementation is ongoing or completed
  - Identified for review but review not yet started
- A high risk of no implementation
  - Not implemented

### Recommendations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strengthen safety management efforts at the Department management level.</li> </ul>	<p>At department managers meetings, safety is most often discussed when it becomes necessary due to a specific issue. Safety is routinely discussed and emphasized at staff-level meetings.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Job hazard analyses could be more readily available.</li> </ul>	<p>Several divisions have digital JHA libraries that are accessible to staff, and JHAs are presented at some monthly safety meetings, especially in those divisions that work with equipment and machinery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Division level managers could more regularly analyze and review injury and claims data to problem solve and share effective strategies.</li> </ul>	<p>Managers do analyze and review injury and safety claims when they occur. Some divisions exchange information or training opportunities between themselves as opportunity presents.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Managers and supervisors should raise the profile of safety by talking about it more frequently</li> </ul>	<p>Many divisions’ monthly staff, safety and management team meetings include reports from the monthly County-wide Safety Meeting. Division managers occasionally reach out to other division managers to get input about a specific safety question.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Department should continue to make employee orientation more consistent and relevant.</li> </ul>	<p>Safety is included in most new employee orientations. As the information can be very site- and task-specific, coordination across divisions is not typical. Uniform guidance from PC HR and Risk Management is included.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Department should continue to integrate training requirements into regular employee performance reviews.</li> </ul>	<p>Some divisions routinely include safety topics in performance reviews, but others do so only if corrective action is needed.</p>

## PPW (formerly PWU) Department Safety Changes Since 2014:

- Increased safety training hours since 2016 (green) has led to a reduced number of workdays lost due to recordable injuries (gold).



- Annual online safety training was first provided for fire extinguisher use in 2012. Heat stress training was added in 2014, followed by Safety Data Sheet (SDS) training in 2015. The SDS online library was updated in 2016. Since 2018, annual safety training has been pushed out to staff and tracked through Workday.
- A Public Works Safety Improvement Committee was created in 2015 but was ultimately disbanded due to the amount of effort needed to sustain it. In 2018 a full-time emergency management planner was added at the department level, which includes safety program development as time allows. Efforts to secure a dedicated FTE for a department-level Safety Coordinator have been unsuccessful to date.
- In 2015, JHA and SDS presentations were added to each monthly safety meeting, and emergency preparedness was added in 2018. Better collaboration and consistency at safety meetings was achieved.
- Safety messaging was added to all-staff meetings at office buildings, and more outside training such as Active Shooter Awareness, Spinal Injury Prevention, and Stop the Bleed has been brought in for staff.
- A new truck-backing procedure was implemented that requires a physical walk around the vehicle for obstructions prior to parking. Back-up beepers are mandatory equipment in county-owned vehicles. Safe driving techniques have been emphasized, especially during winter months.

## Contact Information

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## Project Abstract

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In 2013, the Pierce County Council's Performance Audit Committee approved a study of safety and claims management in the Department of Public Works and Utilities. The purpose of the study was to analyze the effectiveness of the department's safety and claims management efforts and to make recommendations for improvements where applicable. The committee approved a contract with the Athena Group, of Olympia, to conduct the study. The consultants analyzed injury and claims data and reviewed leading practices and safety management efforts in the department.

In 2012, employees reported 119 injuries, resulting in 59 claims and \$508,000 in claims costs, which included medical payments, time loss payments, and other expenses. The study found that the department was following many leading practices in protecting the safety of workers, and that while the County had more claims than comparable organizations, the severity and costs of the claims were lower.

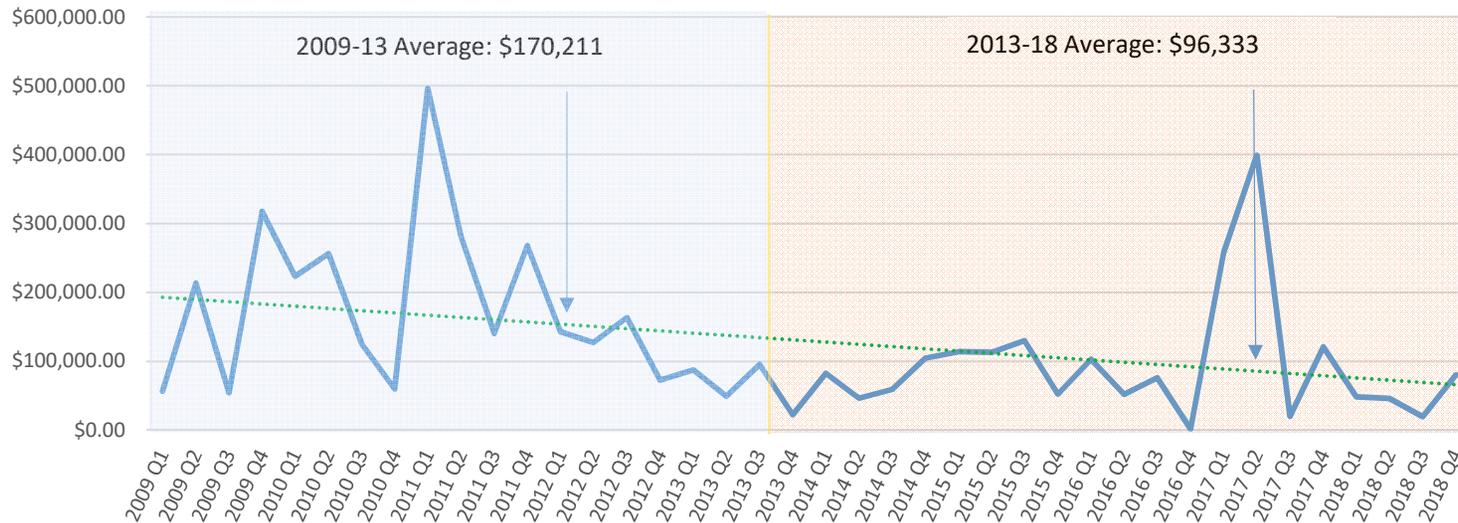
A survey of employees gave management high marks for making safety a priority, and total workers' compensation claims had declined over the prior two years. The report noted department managers and supervisors using several good safety practices that could be applied in other divisions. For example:

- The Road Operations Division is systematically tracking and analyzing its injuries and claims in order to identify potential patterns or issues.
- Traffic Operations has found innovative ways to make sure that employees have access to information on the hazards of their jobs and ways to mitigate those hazards.
- Surface Water managers reported that they are discussing safety in their employee evaluations as a way to emphasize its importance.
- Sewer is providing opportunities for injured employees to return to work on light duty.

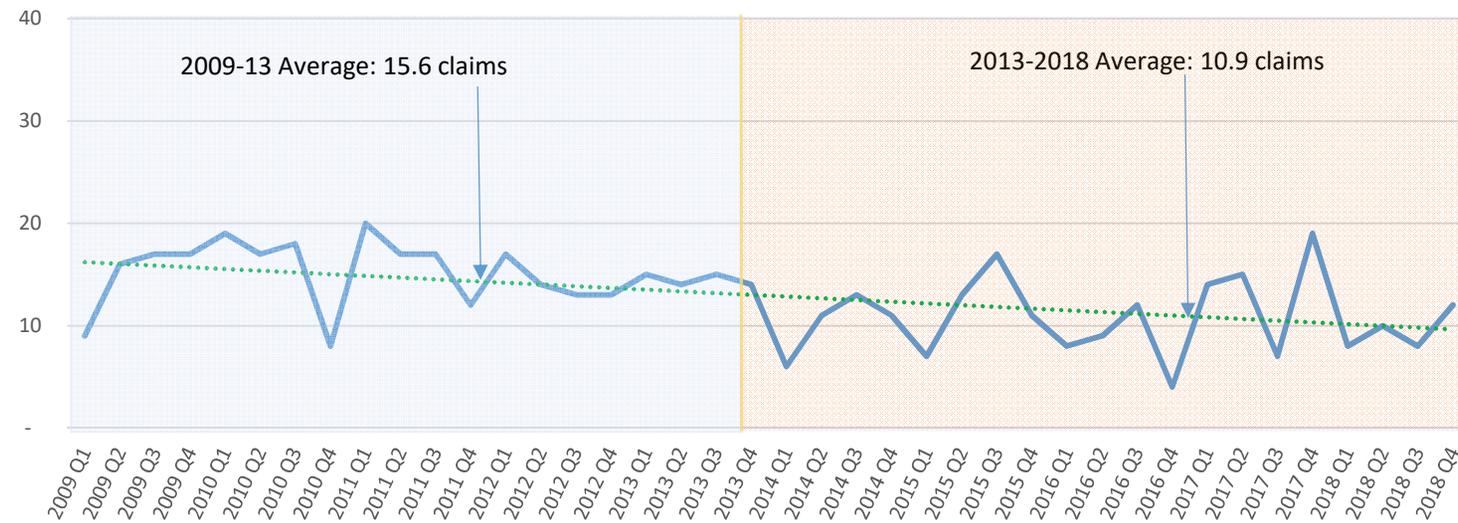
The consultants recommended that the department further strengthen safety and claims management efforts with more detailed and regular claims and injury data analysis, along with regular information sharing and problem-solving sessions among the management team and across divisions within the Department.

The recommendations of the report, along with updates on progress, are summarized above. I have also included updated charts reporting claims and cost data since the report. Numbers of claims and claims costs have decreased.

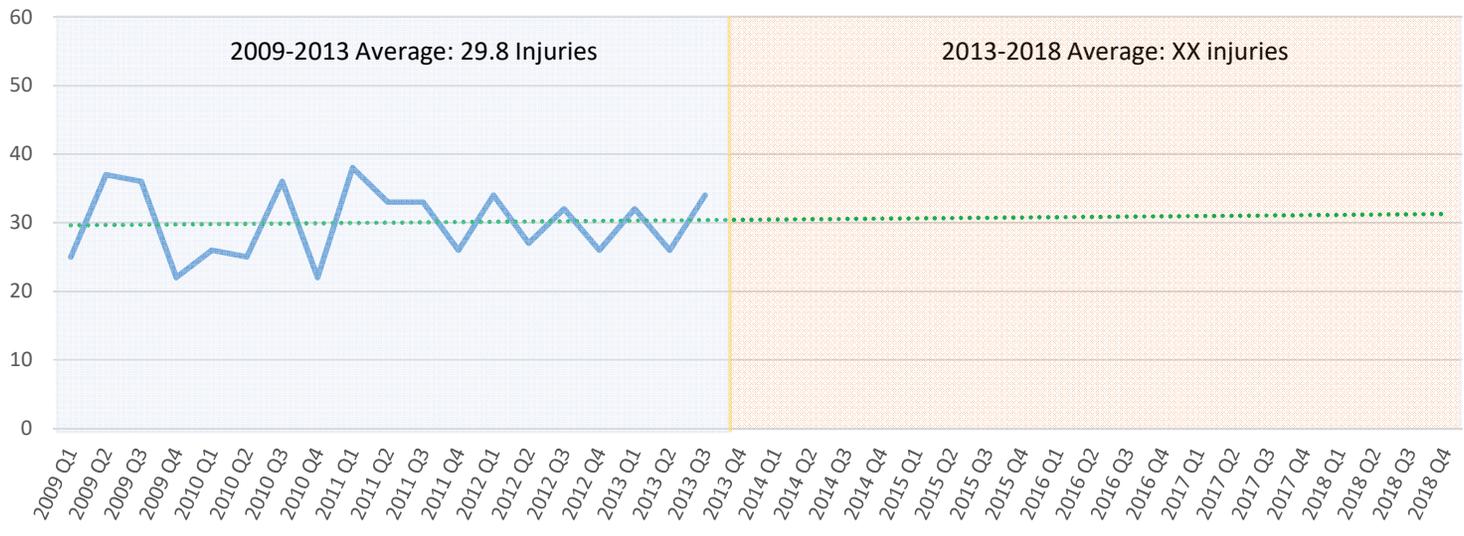
### Claim Costs by Quarter (Paid and Reserves)



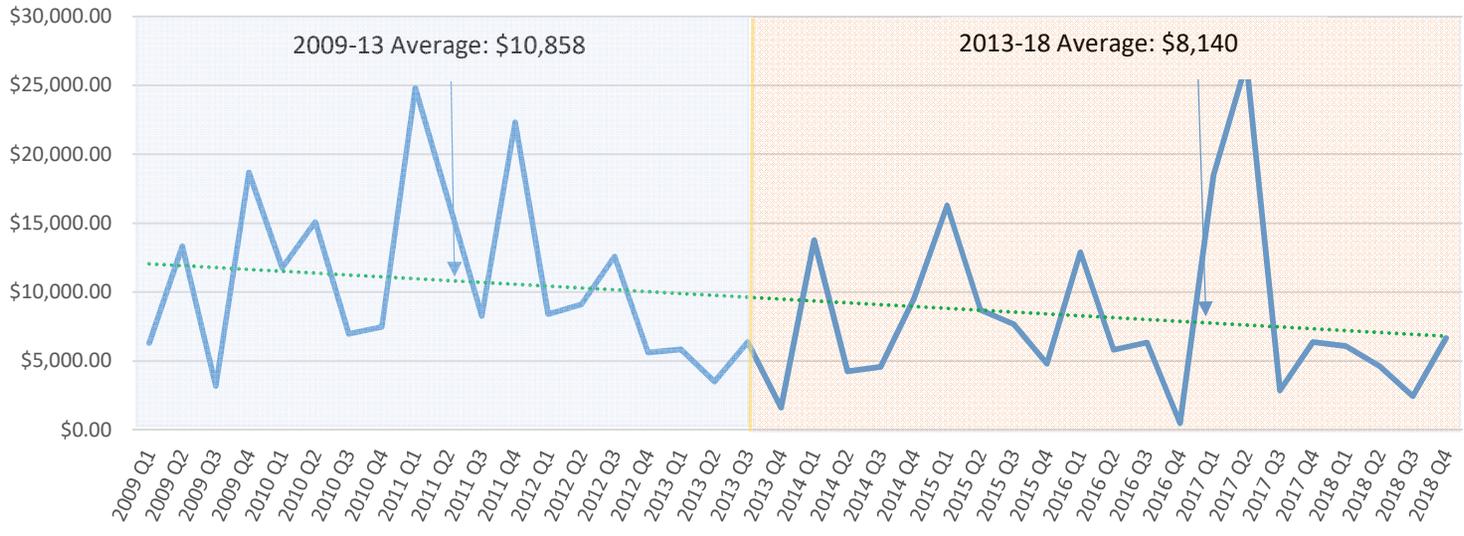
### Average Claims per Quarter



### Average Injuries per Quarter



### Average Cost Per Claim



### Claim Costs by Division

