

Welcome to The NSC Labor Division Blog/Newsletter #3 (In conversation with the NSC these articles may well appear on the Labor Division website under the heading newsletter. This a gracious place for the NSC to be on these and they will also be archived). Email lists are an inexact science at best. We continue to work to make these lists as good as they possibly can be.

Since the last blog, the Labor Division has successfully met with other NSC Divisions. The meetings in Tempe Arizona, the first in-person in over two year, have clearly demonstrated that the Labor Division remains vibrant and a continuing source of mentoring and information for workers and safety and health professionals. Our next meeting will be in San Diego in September and on behalf of the Labor Division it is my pleasure as division Chairperson to let you know we look forward to seeing existing and new members in San Diego and again at future meetings of the division.

Please let us know if the blog(s) are helpful

In Solidarity,
Paul Chaney, Chairperson NSC Labor Division

Before COVID-19 how many of us gave much thought to what would take place should a personal crisis fall upon us? Numerous factors impact the answer to this question. Some of us will say that we have considered and prepared for anything and everything. Others will not be able to say they are so well prepared. Positive aspects of COVID-19 are few and far between, but most everyone agrees that the cracks in our personal armour and the cracks in society have been exposed to the harshest examination. This personal examination is the topic of this blog.

Tragically demonstrated by many of those we know, family and co-worker alike, is that crisis comes when it wants to and generally with little or no warning. Believing that tragedy befalls only other people and not me or my family or my co-workers is often the extent of preparation for a crisis that far too many of us undertake. There is little or no difference in steps taken to prepare for a crisis and the steps we are forced to take after a crisis arrives . However, once the crisis is here the work to complete these steps is vastly magnified by the urgency of the situation. Not to mention that this urgency is compounded by the emotional and psychological distress that are constant companions of such crises.

Safety and Health activists and professionals, well known for asking the question, “what is the worst thing that can happen”, regularly point to the need for emergency preparedness. The question of adequate preparation in the context of the pandemic will be analyzed in every way imaginable. However, in the context of the worst thing, what if the pandemic joins up with extreme weather like recent events, a large-scale derailment and fire such as Lac Megantic in Quebec or a viral storm of flu with COVID? For our purposes, this question is asked only to emphasize the unpredictability of emergencies and crisis and to underscore not only the need for emergency preparedness, but to know that should tragedy strike that we are also personally prepared.

We are all painfully aware that COVID-19 has taken the lives of family, friends, and co-workers in excess of one million in the United States and many tens of thousands more around the world. The pandemic is the clearest example of an avalanche of crises for so many. The

question before us is simple, “what do we need to do to prepare should the unthinkable happen and anyone of us has to deal with loss or perhaps our family has to deal with anyone of us being taken away?”

The name of the game is to make life as easy as possible for those left behind. Where to start? Made up of up to date and complete wills, financial and end of life powers of attorney, named executor, funeral and burial arrangements, endowments to organizations and/or charities, current and updated insurance policies, and who to notify represent some of the more obvious steps to prepare. As there are significant differences across families and work situations, to fulfill all the needs the best step is to seek professional estate planning assistance. Although the costs of securing such professional advice may seem high for some families, like insurance, it pays off in the event of tragedy.

Seemingly less important in the scope of loss or crisis, other considerations will be organ donation status, passwords for social media and virtual accounts to permit the closure of such accounts and the ongoing care of pets. Perhaps best prepared for in estate planning, but items such as automatic payments need to be addressed and in the same context this is where people who will be aiding with the crisis mitigation must know exactly how to find the exact information that permits necessary access to the wide variety of accounts that a person may have.

Sending on behalf of Brother Paul Chaney