



Illinois Legislative News

Solution to costly workplace violence lies in awareness, state says

If the first step in stopping workplace violence is to recognize signs of stress, then the second step is to have a plan in place to address the problem, state officials say.

“There are steps that should be taken to keep employees informed and aware of the warning signs to look for in the workplace. Employers should also implement a violence prevention program,” said Illinois OSHA Division Manager Brandy Lozosky.

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration defines workplace violence as “any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the workplace.”

Establishing a zero-tolerance

policy toward workplace violence is the best protection an employer can offer, according to OSHA.

But other precautions should also be taken, including:

- Provide safety education for employees so they know what conduct is not acceptable, what to do if they witness or experience such conduct and how to protect themselves.
- Secure the workplace. Surveillance cameras, proper lighting, key or badge entry and guards can all help alleviate possible violence at work.
- Encourage employees to alert supervisors to any concerns they have about coworkers’ erratic or poten-

tially dangerous behavior, as well as any other safety issue they believe could lead to violence at work.

- Provide for a buddy system or escort service for employees who need it in potentially dangerous situations or at night.

Workplace violence is said to pose an economic price: The Department of Justice and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health estimate victims of workplace violence miss 1.8 million days of work each year, costing an estimated \$121 billion.

“Protecting employees on the job goes beyond worksite hazards. Unfortunately, this includes protection from violence and other outside threats,” said Illinois Depart-

ment of Labor Director Michael Kleinik.

Health care is the among the most common fields for workplace violence, along with service providers, like delivery and ride-hailing drivers, and school employees. Retail workers are also among the most targeted.

OSHA classifies workplace violence into four categories: criminal intent, customer-client, worker-on-worker, and personal relationship. Workplace violence is a growing concern among both employers and employees, regardless of the type of job and is now one of the leading causes of job-related deaths.

More information is on the Illinois OSHA website.

Illinois beefs up driving penalties in bid to protect first responders

By JERRY NOWICKI
Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – Seventeen crashes involving Illinois state troopers or their vehicles have occurred in 2021 as a result of violations to the state’s traffic law known as “Scott’s Law.”

Gov. JB Pritzker signed a new law this past month, Senate Bill 1913, allowing judges to issue community service among other penalties to those violating the law, which requires drivers to slow down and change lanes when there is a first responder present with flashing lights stopped on the roadway. The measure was sponsored by Sen. Julie Morrison, D-Lake Forest, and Rep. Janet Yang Rohr, D-Naperville, and will take effect in January.

The governor also signed a bill clarifying the scope of Scott’s Law and one creating a database of mental health programs for first responders. All three measures passed the General Assembly with unanimous bipartisan support.

“This is a wake-up call for every resident of Illinois – your distracted driving could be someone else’s worst nightmare, and no text or other distraction is worth that,” Pritzker said at a bill-signing event at the Illinois Capitol in



Kelly

Springfield. “So next time you hit the road – to be clear, every time you hit the road – please remember the real risks of not honoring Scott’s Law.”

In February, Illinois State Trooper Brian Frank was the fourth involved in a crash this year due to a violation of Scott’s Law. His wife, Lauren Frank, said at the bill signing event that over the past six months, she and her husband have been on an arduous journey that has included visits to 35 doctors, four hospitals, three brain surgeries, two emergency room visits, 12 ambulance rides and eight weeks of therapy.

“The setbacks are devastating, and the unknowns of our future are overwhelming,” she said. “And again, this was all preventable.”

Frank said while Scott’s Law was named for Lt. Scott Gillen, a firefighter killed while assisting with a crash on the Dan Ryan Expressway in 2000, it honors every officer who has died on roadways and those who currently patrol them.

ISP reported 1,340 violations of the law during the 19-day period between Feb. 18 and March 7, according to the Governor’s Office.

Illinois State Police Director Brendan Kelly noted “education and enforcement” are the best method of ensuring safety through Scott’s Law, crediting Frank for her efforts to share her story.

“And maybe if they listen just a little bit to what she had to say, they’ll slow down, they’ll move over, they’ll give a damn about what’s going on around them, instead of being self-centered and being clueless about the people that are out there trying to protect public safety,” he said.

Kelly said one of the laws signed by Pritzker, House Bill 3656, makes it easier to prosecute drivers violating the law.

That language says, “Drivers of vehicles approaching a stationary emergency vehicle in any lane shall heed the warning of the signal, reduce the speed of the vehicle, proceed with due caution, maintain a safe speed for road conditions, be prepared to stop, and leave a safe distance until safely passed the stationary emergency vehicle.”

That law, sponsored by Chicago Democrats Rep. Fran Hurley and Sen. Antonio Muñoz, also creates a “Move Over Early Warning Task Force” made

up of members appointed by state agencies and law enforcement entities to study ways to better enforce road safety and alert drivers to hazards.

Senate Bill 1575, sponsored by Chicago Democrats Sen. Robert Martwick and Rep. Lindsey LaPointe, directs the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Mental Health to create an online database of mental health resources geared to first responders.

The database will include information on crisis services, wellness, trauma information, nutrition, stress reduction, anxiety, depression, violence prevention, suicide prevention and substance abuse. The goal is for that program to go live by January.

Frank, meanwhile, said more is needed to support officers, including adequate funding to ensure every squad car “is the most capable the market has to offer at withstanding damage.”

“It continues after that with unparalleled medical care for officers injured in the line of duty,” she said, citing costs and barriers to medical care as burdens on officers’ families.

* Capitol News Illinois photo by Jerry Nowicki

State seeks to expand pre-apprenticeship training, boost diversity in trades

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has launched the new Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, leveraging a \$10 million commitment to provide additional training programs that will expand the talent pipeline while boosting diversity within the construction industry and building trades.

A Notice of Funding Opportunity released by the DCEO Illinois Works Office aims to expand access to training programs that will prepare residents for well-paying jobs in the trades – with plans to focus on reducing barriers to entry and increasing representation of women and people of color in these fields.

The apprenticeship program is a key component of the Illinois Works Jobs Program Act – a result of legislation put forward by Governor Pritzker to prepare residents for jobs created by a historic \$45 billion capital expansion plan.

Through the program, stakeholders aim to create a network of providers across the state to recruit, prescreen, and provide pre-apprenticeship skills training. Providers will manage the program graduates’ transition from the pre-apprentice-

ship program to a full apprenticeship program in construction and building trades.

DCEO estimates that pre-apprenticeship training programs supported by these grant funds will serve as many as 1,000 participants during the first program year.

DCEO is now accepting applications for grant proposals– to view the NOFO, visit DCEO’s website.

“For job seekers, pre-apprenticeship programs can provide an on-ramp to receive training in high-growth sectors, leading to higher wages and increased benefits for them and their families,” said Angela Morrison, policy engagement manager at the Chicago Jobs Council.

Participants of the program will attend tuition-free and receive a stipend and other supportive services to help overcome systemic barriers to entering the construction industry. Upon completion of the program, pre-apprentices will receive industry aligned certifications which will prepare and qualify them to continue to a full-time apprenticeship program in one of the trades.

Eligible applicants include non-profit, community-based organizations,

such as colleges, industry associations, chambers of commerce, local workforce areas, community colleges, technical schools, and school districts. Grants awards will range from \$200,000-\$550,000 for a one-year agreement.

“We know that when Illinoisans of all backgrounds see what a career in the construction and building trades can mean for a better way of life for themselves and their families, they are ready to go to work but sometimes just need a little help getting into the pipeline,” said Tim Drea, Illinois AFL-CIO president and CEO.

Signed into law in 2019, the Illinois Works Jobs Program Act is designed to promote diversity, inclusion and use of apprentices in state-funded capital projects. The Act created three major programs: the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program; the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative, and the Illinois Works Bid Credit Program. Together these three programs aim to create a talent pipeline of skilled and diverse candidates to fill new job opportunities created by the Act.

The Office of Illinois Works operates in collaboration with workforce

partners, the building trades and construction industry, as well as the Illinois Works Review Panel, which contributed to the development of this NOFO.

“The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship program has been desperately needed in the State of Illinois for decades,” said Rep. Will Davis. “For too long, Black men and women have faced incredible barriers to accessing the high-wage, middle class careers available in the building trades.”

The launch of Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program dollars is the latest of several steps taken by the administration to increase access to apprenticeship opportunities throughout Illinois – a priority outlined in the state’s five-year economic plan. Key investments so far include the passage of bipartisan legislation to create the Illinois apprenticeship tax credit, funding additional workforce training partners and sites statewide, and creation of a new apprenticeship navigators model focused on increasing equity in apprenticeship positions funded in Illinois across all industries.

For more information, visit <https://www.illinoisworknet.com>.