

ON PULSE

WITH PIRMA

PIRMA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Mifflinburg Borough,
Union County

Photo: Jim Cheney



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PIRMA

Partnership. Protection. Confidence.

PIRMA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

PIRMA is a group self-insurance pool that offers comprehensive liability and property coverages to Pennsylvania public entities. PIRMA has grown steadily since its formation in 1987 and is over 600 members strong - making it the largest public entity pool in Pennsylvania. To learn more about PIRMA, visit www.pirma.org.

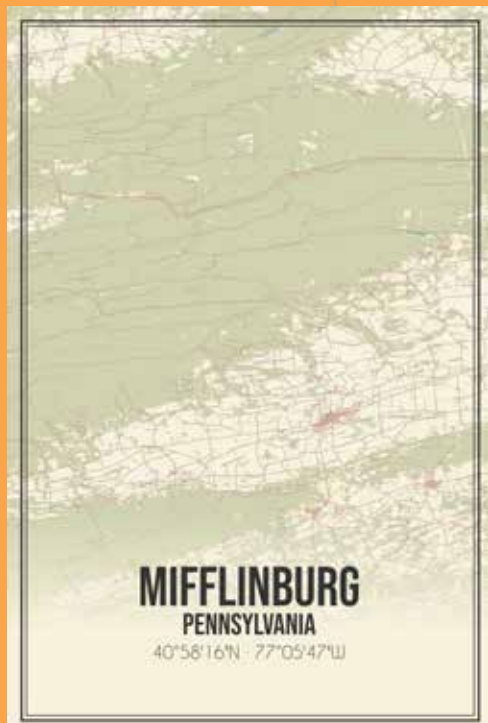


By Nicholas A. Tonelli from Pennsylvania, USA

WELCOME TO
Mifflinburg
Pennsylvania

MIFFLINBURG BOROUGH IN UNION COUNTY

Mifflinburg Borough in Union County has been a PIRMA member since 1996. The Borough's current population is 3,485. The Borough was incorporated in 1827 and is named after Pennsylvania's first Governor - Thomas Mifflin. Located in the Susquehanna River Valley, the area is known for agriculture and tourism. In the 19th century, the Borough served as a hub for buggy manufacturing. The Borough is home to the Christkindl Market, a traditional German Christmas Festival.



LOSS CONTROL GRANT

**COLLEGEVILLE BOROUGH,
MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

\$5,000 Grant

Collegeville Borough will be refinishing the surface of the community park basketball court and adding an ADA compliant walkway and swing with their \$5,000 Loss Control grant.



LEGAL LANDSCAPE



IT'S TIME FOR AN HR AUDIT

BY CHRISTOPHER P. GERBER, ESQUIRE | SIANA LAW

As newly elected officials are sworn in at their re-organization meetings in January 2024, the governing body they serve, together with all municipal employees, should start the year with a clear understanding of their roles and obligations, which are necessary to run local government lawfully and responsibly.

To achieve this goal, implementation of effective policies and procedures, coupled with workplace training, should be a top priority. Accordingly, it is advisable that newly installed borough councils and boards of supervisors and commissioners direct their appointed professionals to conduct a Human Resources audit as follows:

A Clear Chain of Command & Well-Drafted Governing Documents

All members of the governing body, the appointed manager, chief of police, borough mayors, municipal department heads and non-supervisory employees should understand and follow a clear chain of command that is defined by a well-drafted personnel manual, employment-related ordinances, and, in certain circumstances, individual employment contracts. In turn, these governing documents and municipal legislative enactments must acknowledge the terms and conditions of employment that are defined by collective bargaining agreements.

It is advisable that all members of the governing body maintain an up-to-date binder of all foregoing documents for ease of reference at public meetings and executive sessions throughout their entire tenure.

The Personnel Manual

The personnel manual should generally define employees' rights and benefits, together with procedures that address workplace disputes. The following is a non-exhaustive checklist of fundamental provisions:

1. A statement that the manual does not alter the "at-will" employment doctrine;
2. The manual applies to *all* municipal employees, with the exception that terms of employment governed by a separate employment contract or collective bargaining agreement shall apply if inconsistent with the manual;
3. Family and Medical Leave Act and other leave policies;
4. Code of conduct and progressive discipline procedures;
5. Health and safety provisions;
6. A well-defined workplace harassment and discrimination policy, with procedure for filing complaints;
7. Acknowledgement signed by all employees and filed in their personnel file.

Personal Files

All employee personnel files should be maintained in accordance with Pennsylvania's Personnel File Inspection Act, 43 P.S. §1332, which identifies the documents that are maintained in the file and grants employees the right to inspect only certain portions of their employment records.

The Act provides the following:

An "Employee" is any person:

- currently employed;
- laid off with re-employment rights; or
- on a leave of absence.

An "Employee" is not:

- an applicant for employment;
- any other person;
- a terminated worker; or
- a former employee, regardless of how quickly following the termination they request their personnel file.

A "Personnel file" contains the following information:

- any application for employment;
- wage or salary information;
- notices of commendations;
- warning or discipline;
- authorization for a deduction or withholding of pay, fringe benefit information;
- leave records and employment history with the employer including salary information, job title, dates of changes, retirement record, attendance records, and performance evaluations.

The Personnel File shall not include the following:

- records of an employee relating to the investigation of a possible criminal offense;
- letters of reference;
- documents which are being developed or prepared for use in civil, criminal or grievance procedures;
- medical records; and
- materials which are used by the employer to plan for future operations or information available to the employee under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

The municipality must, at reasonable times upon request of an employee, permit them or their designated agent to inspect their personnel files used to determine their qualifications for employment, promotion, additional compensation, termination or disciplinary action. The Act does not entitle employees to copy or remove the personnel file, which remains the property of the municipality.

Workplace Training

The best way to avoid workplace disputes and costly litigation is through effective *education*. Periodic workplace training that addresses the roles and obligations of all municipal officials and employees and procedures on harassment and discrimination is critical.

Good government starts with informed leadership. Now is the time for local government leaders to satisfy that responsibility by directing an HR audit.

About the author: Christopher P. Gerber, Esq., is an attorney with Siana Law. He can be reached at 610.321.5500 ext. 114 and cpgerber@sianalaw.com. Visit the law firm's website at: www.sianalaw.com



LOSS CONTROL

WINTERIZING YOUR VEHICLE

BY PIRMA Service Team

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of workplace death. For your safety and for the safety of your municipality, consider the checklists below when getting behind the wheel this winter.

EVERYDAY DRIVING SAFETY

- If weather conditions are bad, consider postponing the drive
- If weather conditions could become questionable, share your travel plans and routes with someone before you leave
- Refrain from driving if you are impaired, exhausted, or otherwise unfit
- Leave enough time to safely reach your destination
- Clean external camera lenses and sensors to allow all assistive-driving features to work correctly
- Position and clean mirrors for clear visibility
- Program your navigation system before you start driving
- Adjust your seat so you can easily reach all knobs, dials, and switches
- Put your cellphone or any other distracting devices away
- Make sure everyone in the vehicle has their seatbelt securely fastened



DRIVING SAFETY FOR WINTRY CONDITIONS

- Use appropriate signals and lights when driving
- Observe and obey all traffic signs and posted speed limits
- Drive slowly and cautiously in populated areas and parking lots
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly; if possible, refrain from stopping uphill
- If visibility is severely limited, pull off the road to a safe place; do not drive until conditions improve
- Avoid using cruise control in wintry conditions
- Plan breaks for long driving trips
- Steer in the direction of a skid, to avoid the need for overcorrection when your wheels regain traction
- The Anti-lock braking system (ABS) helps steer in emergencies by restoring traction; ABS may vibrate or pulse when engaged; continue to press and hold pressure to the brake pedal until the vehicle has come to a stop.

VEHICLE SUPPLIES

In most cases, if you become stranded in an unfamiliar area, do not abandon your vehicle. Make sure the vehicle's exhaust pipe is not blocked. Light flares in front of and behind the vehicle.

Every vehicle should have an emergency supply kit. Kits should be checked every six months, and expired items should be replaced regularly. Vehicle emergency supply kits should include:

- A properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench, and tripod jack
- Jumper cables and duct tape
- Tool kit and/or a multipurpose utility tool and a fire extinguisher
- Flashlight, batteries & car charger
- Reflective triangles and brightly colored cloth to make your vehicle more visible

WINTER VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

- Keep the gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze
- Use winter tires with a deeper, more flexible tread; if using all-season tires, check the tread and replace if less than 2/32 of an inch
- Check tire pressure (tire pressure drops as the temperature declines)
- Add wiper fluid rated for -30 degrees
- Check wiper blades and replace if needed
- Become familiar with the vehicle and any built-in safety features



Winter Driving Checklist

- Flashlight
- First Aid kit
- Snow shovel
- Booster cables
- Flares/triangles
- Extra food & water
- Warm clothes/blanket
- Sand/cat litter



RISK SERVICES

MITIGATING RISKS THROUGH EVENT LOG MONITORING, SYSTEM REPLACEMENT, AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

BY PIRMA SERVICE TEAM

In today's interconnected world, cybersecurity is paramount. Municipalities face a myriad of threats that can compromise their sensitive data, disrupt operations and damage their reputation. To counter these threats, cybersecurity professionals deploy a range of mitigation controls. We will explore three critical aspects of cyber mitigation: monitoring event logs, replacing end-of-life systems and managing supply chain risks.

MONITORING EVENT LOGS

Event log monitoring is a cornerstone of cybersecurity. It involves the systematic tracking and analysis of events on a network or system. This process enables the early detection of anomalies, which could indicate a security breach or other issues. Effective event log monitoring can save an organization from devastating cyberattacks and data breaches.

KEY STEPS IN EVENT LOG MONITORING INCLUDE:

- 1. Collection:** Logs from various sources such as servers, firewalls, and endpoints are collected and centralized in a secure location.
- 2. Analysis:** Advanced tools and algorithms analyze these logs in real-time, searching for patterns or irregularities.
- 3. Alert:** When suspicious activities are detected, automated alerts are triggered enabling swift responses.
- 4. Response:** Security teams investigate alerts, identify the root cause, and take necessary action to mitigate the threat.

REPLACING END-OF-LIFE SYSTEMS

Outdated or end-of-life systems are major cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Unsupported systems no longer receive security patches and updates, leaving them exposed to known vulnerabilities. Hackers often exploit these weaknesses, making system replacement a critical mitigation control.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPLACING END-OF-LIFE SYSTEMS:

- 1. Inventory:** Entities should maintain an up-to-date inventory of their systems, including information about their life cycles.
- 2. Budgeting:** Allocate funds for system replacement in advance to ensure a smooth transition.
- 3. Planning:** Develop a migration plan that includes testing, data transfer, and user training.
- 4. Security:** Prioritize security by configuring the new systems with the latest security features and best practices.





MANAGING SUPPLY CHAIN RISKS

Supply chain risks have gained prominence in recent years due to the increasing complexity of global business operations. Cyberattacks on suppliers can cascade through the supply chain, affecting organizations far removed from the initial breach. To mitigate these risks, a proactive approach is essential.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SUPPLY CHAIN RISKS:

- 1. Vendor Assessment:** Assess the cybersecurity practices of all suppliers and ensure they adhere to industry standards and best practices.
- 2. Contractual Obligations:** Embed cybersecurity requirements in contracts, including reporting breaches and maintaining a certain level of security.
- 3. Continuous Monitoring:** Continuously monitor supplier security and implement incident response plans for supply chain disruptions.
- 4. Diversification:** Reduce dependency on a single supplier by diversifying your supply chain sources.

Mitigating cyber risks is an ongoing process that requires vigilance and adaptability. Event log monitoring, system replacement and supply chain risk management are fundamental elements of a robust cybersecurity strategy. By implementing these controls, organizations can enhance their resilience against cyber threats and protect their valuable assets, data and reputation.

In today's digital age, these measures are not optional; they are a necessity for safeguarding the future of any public entity.



Event log monitoring, system replacement and supply chain management are all essential components of a robust cybersecurity strategy. By investing in these practices, municipalities can reduce the risk of security incidents, minimize the impact of incidents that do occur and improve their overall security posture. As cyber threats continue to evolve, it is important for municipalities to stay up-to-date with best practices and continue to adapt their cybersecurity strategies to protect against new threats. If you have cybersecurity questions, feel free to contact the IT support contact for PIRMA.

GET THE PERKS PIRMA BENEFITS

ALL THE PERKS OF BEING A PIRMA MEMBER

PIRMA members are entitled to benefits that help them better serve their communities.

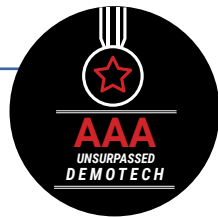


DEMOTECH, INC. RATING

PIRMA RECEIVES AAA, UNSURPASSED FINANCIAL STABILITY RATING

It is a privilege to report that Demotech, Inc., has awarded PIRMA a 2023 Financial Stability Rating® of AAA, UNSURPASSED. Regardless of the severity of a general economic downturn or deterioration in the insurance cycle, insurers earning a Financial Stability Rating® of AAA possess unsurpassed financial stability related to maintaining surplus as regards policyholders at an acceptable level.

AAA UNSURPASSED is the highest rating issued by Demotech, Inc. PIRMA is proud to have earned the highest AAA rating for over 20 years.



CYBER TIP

Cybersecurity Audit: Evaluate the current state of your cybersecurity measures, including network security, data protection, and incident response protocols.

By conducting a thorough cybersecurity review at the end of the year, a risk assessment pool entity can help its members stay vigilant and prepared against evolving cyber threats.



LEGAL ACCESS PROGRAM

FREE CONSULTATIONS

Whether your entity is dealing with a new issue as a result of the pandemic or would like advice on an existing aspect of your governmental operations or general municipal law, PIRMA's Legal Access Program can offer some guidance. PIRMA members are eligible **for up to 120 minutes of free legal consultation annually** on a wide range of matters including employment issues, wage and hour questions, zoning and land use matters, law enforcement civil liability issues, open records and open meetings laws, public works liability issues, contract review and recommendations, governmental immunities and much more. PIRMA members seeking legal consultation for their entity may call:

855-607-4762.

RESOURCE ELIBRARY UPGRADES



Earlier this year, PIRMA upgraded two platforms within the Resource eLibrary. These two new platforms offer PIRMA members a cleaner, easier to use interface filled with useful documents, articles, training tools, and more.

Resource eLibrary, a favorite resource among PIRMA members, has been upgraded to a new platform called NeoGov LEARN. Topics and tools included within the platform are: Employment Liability, Streets and Roads, Internet Security/Social Media, Fire Departments, Law Enforcement, General Safety, and many more!

Also newly upgraded for PIRMA members are the HR and Cyber portals. The updated platform, Zywave, still includes all of the great HR and Cyber resources such as: information on state and federal employment laws, interviewing, background check guidelines, applications, the handbook builder, cyber security training, cyber tips, IT audit kits, checklists and more.



Zywave Cyber Portal

Cyber tools are available to minimize costly cyber risks to public entities.

Resources Include:

- IT Security Audit Kit & Risk Assessment
- Online Cyber Training & Seminars
- Cyber Best Practices
- Regulations & State Law Resources
- Cyber Tip of the Day



NeoGov LEARN

Hundreds of in-depth, interactive training courses & resources.

Topics Include:

- Employment Liability
- Stress Management at Work
- Harassment Prevention
- Accident & Incident Investigation
- Managing Stress in Uncertain Times
- Opioid Safety



Zywave HR Portal

Find many tools to help navigate through employment issues.

Resources Include:

- Disaster & Emergency Center
- Customizable Forms & Policies
- Employee Handbook Generator
- Background Check Guidelines
- Drug & Alcohol Policies
- State & Federal Employment Laws



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If our mailing records need to be updated, please contact PIRMA at (800) 362-1011.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BOARD MEETING

*February 8, 2024 | 9:00 AM
Virtual Meeting*



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