



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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Memorandum

To: All Employees

From: Tara Sweeney TS
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

Subject: Indian Affairs – Safety in the Workplace

In my travels across Indian Country, I have seen first-hand the great importance of providing a safe working and learning environment for our employees, students, visitors, and tribal community members. In Indian Affairs, I want to foster an environment where employees feel free to report safety concerns, supervisors are given the tools to address those concerns, and staff throughout Indian Affairs feel they have the support of senior leadership to provide a safe environment.

Indian Affairs has a strong annual safety inspection program that has achieved 100% completion of inspections at sites over the last three years. While inspections are key, it is even more critical for the on-site leaders to address the findings in the reports by completing the required abatement plans. Keep in mind, safety is not just related to facilities, there are written programs as well as training requirements that need to be accomplished. I will be introducing an Indian Affairs Occupational Safety and Health Training Plan in the coming months that will require all employees and supervisors to take an overall safety course through DOI Talent to provide everybody with a common knowledge and terminology of safety. A critical part of this training plan is the supervisor and employee at the working levels who need to work together to evaluate the hazards of their job and provide specific training to the job hazards.

Furthermore, for accident and incident reporting, the Department of the Interior has an on-line system called the Safety Management Information System (SMIS) that can be used to report near-misses, accidents, and incidents. Supervisors at sites, such as the Agency Superintendent or School Principals, are responsible for the overall safety and should take this responsibility seriously.

Safety is more than complying with laws and regulations and we must begin to create a safety culture of prevention rather than reaction. I am committed to the safety in Indian Affairs and remind all staff that safety is everyone's responsibility.

If you have any questions about our safety program or need technical assistance, please contact the appropriate BIE Safety Specialists and/or Managers, BIA Regional Safety Managers, or Mr. Paul Holley, Division Chief, Division of Safety and Risk Management, at paul.holley@bia.gov.