The CAO Weekly Report
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Monterey County Administrative Office
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- One county employee shares her story of being a poll worker on Election Day
- Public Works has a plan to smooth the way for pedestrians and bicyclists in Castroville
- Important information for any employee about Workers’ Compensation from the District Attorney’s Office

Perspectives from a County Poll Worker

The Elections Department recently sent out an email invitation to county employees to participate in the Employee Election Official Program. This program was established by the Board of Supervisors in 2002, which recognized the value of having a program to allow employees to serve voters in their county on Election Day.

Have you ever wondered exactly what an Employee Election Official actually does? DeAnna Hilbrants, Administrative Manager at Emergency Communications shares her experience about working on Election Day as a poll worker:

*I've been working as a poll worker since 2007. I originally got involved to broaden my knowledge of County government by working for a different department than my normal assignment. I started as a polling place clerk in Pajaro, which is near the border of Santa Cruz County. By the next election, I was serving as the polling place inspector. I've been absolutely hooked on that community and the job ever since.*

*It's wonderful to see the level of engagement and diversity of such a small community. Working at the same polling place, I see the same faces time after time and appreciate that many of these citizens vote in every election and they regularly express to me and my team how important voting is to them. In addition, I see young men and women voting for the first time as they have just turned 18 and older men and*
women who are voting for the first time since they have become citizens. I also have wonderful returning polling place workers – with little rotation among a small group. The support from the Elections Department is also excellent. I am constantly amazed about how everything gets out to the polling place without missing items.

In addition to my own assignment, when my son was old enough, he became a student worker. In addition to earning school credits, spending money and work experience for job applications, this opportunity gave him a connection to the process and he registered to vote as soon as he turned 18.

I encourage anyone to take some time away from their normal day to serve.

DeAnna Hilbrants
Administrative Manager, Emergency Communications

Some important election dates to remember: Monday, October 10th is the first day of Early Voting; Tuesday, October 11th is the first day vote by mail ballots will hit the US mail stream (Monday is a federal holiday, the post office will not be open); and Monday, October 24th is the last day to register to vote for the November 2011 Election.

Public Works Going to New Heights to Give Castroville Pedestrians and Bicyclists a Smooth Route

The Department of Public Works’ Castroville Railroad Crossing Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Project will provide local residents with a safe and convenient bicycle/pedestrian network to schools, work, shopping centers and recreational activity centers.

Still in the initial design and environmental phase, the project will begin at State Highway 183/Merritt Street and include:

- Installing bicycle route signs along Pajaro and McDougall Streets
- Constructing a combination of Class II bicycle lanes and a Class I bicycle path along Salinas Street, Benson and Collins Roads
- Building an overcrossing at the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to an existing bicycle path along Castroville Boulevard

The total project length is approximately 4,630 feet. The overcrossing will be approximately 1,300 feet long and 8 feet wide with 2-foot shoulders for a total of 12 feet.
The preliminary cost estimate is $6,000,000. The project is funded with a variety of federal, state, and local grant monies. The project is scheduled for construction in 2014.

**What You Should Know About Workers’ Compensation**

In this continuing series, the Monterey County District Attorney’s Office shares important information everyone should know about Workers’ Compensation and how that office handles cases of those who abuse this important program.

Workers’ Compensation insurance provides coverage for employees when an injury or illness is work-related or industrial with a few exceptions. There must be an employer-employee relationship and the illness or injury must “arise out of employment” or “in the course of employment.” An employee that has a work related injury is entitled to specific benefits that can include reasonable and necessary medical care, temporary disability for lost wages, permanent disability and/or vocational rehabilitation.

An employee who is injured should immediately report the injury to their supervisor or employer. The employer is required to provide a DWC-1 form to the employee within one working day. The claims administrator for the employer should pay all costs so that the injured worker should not receive a bill. Other important points to know:

- There are limits on some medical services
- The employer generally selects the Primary Treating Physician [PTP] for the first 30 days
- There are different rules due to the type of insurance coverage so see your employer for further information.

An injured employee should be aware that their medical records do not have the same level of privacy as they might expect. An injured worker must provide information about the injury that includes how it
occurred, anyone who might have witnessed the occurrence and must be completely honest in relating the injury.

An employee who lies about an injury to receive benefits may be guilty of a felony. An injured worker is considered the applicant in a workers’ compensation claim and applicant fraud is a crime which can be committed in many ways, such as:

- Making a false claim of an injury
- Not disclosing other relevant precedent injuries
- Not divulge money being earned while receiving payments for the injury
- Exaggerating physical disabilities or limitations.

If a worker is injured on the job and the injury relates to a pre-existing injury, the employee may still be entitled to benefits but there may be an apportionment issue. The employer’s workers’ compensation insurance would only be responsible for the portion that is related to the current injury.

District Attorney Dean D. Flippo is committed to making the workers’ compensation system work for those who need the benefits from a work-related injury.