



Charleston County News Release

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See photos: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/safety.htm>

County's Safety and Risk Management Department Receives Three State Awards

Charleston County presented with awards by the S.C. Association of Counties

Charleston County Government announces that its Safety and Risk Management Department has received three state awards from the S.C. Association of Counties:

- 2007 Safety Achievement Award
- 2007 Sustained Excellence in Risk Management Award
- 2007 Service Award

2007 Safety Achievement Award

The 2007 Outstanding Safety Achievement Award was awarded to Charleston County for the combined effort between the Safety and Risk Management Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

The award was given because the number of back injuries to EMS paramedics and emergency medical technicians was reduced by over 70 percent after the County implemented 23 new hydraulic ambulance stretchers.

"The new stretchers can mechanically and safely lift patients weighing up to 650 pounds, which has greatly reduced the repetitive and heavy daily lifting done by our emergency responders," said Larry Hodge, Director of Charleston County's Safety and Risk Management Department.

The County purchased the new stretchers after its successful use of stair chairs, which can safely transport patients down flights of stairs.

"Since the County began using stair chairs two years ago, not one EMS employee has received a back injury while using the equipment," Hodge said. "Prior to the implementation of the stair chairs, EMS employees were challenged daily to lift patients down flights of stairs, which in historic buildings and homes, are often narrow and sometimes uneven."

2007 Sustained Excellence in Risk Management Award

The 2007 Sustained Excellence in Risk Management Award was given to Charleston County for its continued strain injury reduction campaign initiative, which was introduced by the Safety and Risk Management Department. Charleston County also received this award for achieving the lowest number of on the job injuries since joining the South Carolina Counties Workers Compensation Trust in 1991.

2007 marked the third consecutive year that the County experienced a reduced number of on-the-job injuries, which has been a major factor in reducing its workers compensation insurance costs.

"This accomplishment is projected to save \$400,000 in workers compensation insurance costs for next year's County budget," Hodge said.

2007 Service Award

The 2007 Service Award was given to Charleston County's Safety and Risk Management Department for assisting other South Carolina counties with their safety and risk management concerns.

The award was also given for the department's oversight during Habitat for Humanity's Women Build Week. The department helped keep the County's female employees safe as they volunteered to build homes for citizens in need.

"During the past two years of participating in the Habitat for Humanity homebuilding projects, not one Charleston County employee has been injured while working on these home building projects," Hodge said. "We were present at the build site, but we also trained our employees in advance so they can safely work electrical equipment and other tools needed for the job."

The Safety and Risk Management Department also assisted during the Palmetto Police Motorcycle Skills Competition, which was sponsored by the Charleston County Sheriff's Office.

"This was the second consecutive motorcycle skills competition hosted in Charleston, and again we saw no injuries, thanks to the excellent pre-planning and on-site management of this event by the Sheriff's Office and Safety and Risk Management staff," Hodge said.

Safety is one of Charleston County's core values: "Shared accountability for the safety and well-being of our employees and the citizens we serve."

"The Safety and Risk Management Department thanks our fellow County employees who worked with us to make the achievements and cost reductions possible," Hodge said. "Safety is its own award!"

Charleston County's Safety and Risk Management Department received the three state awards at the S.C. Association of Counties' Insurance Trust meeting on Jan. 30-31.

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