



# STATEHOUSE OBSERVER

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## Dealing with Reduction in Force

Recently Methodist EAP hosted a seminar for state employees to discuss some of the emotional effects the RIF may have on you or your co-workers. According to Sarah Moeller Swan, M.S. Education Consultant for the EAP, both the employees who leave and the ones who stay may experience coping difficulties during this time of change.

There are five stages of grief although individuals will experience them in their own way, on their own timetable:

**Shock and Denial**—Even if employees know that layoffs are coming, people often don't think it will be them. In order to cope, some people deny reality. They may think there was some kind of mistake, that they're going to get their job back, that the layoff is only temporary.

**Anger**—People who experience job loss will often be angry. They will look for someone or something to blame.

**Bargaining**—Laid off employees may dwell on how they could have saved their jobs. May also think about how they will do better if given another chance or even another job.

**Depression**—Layoffs can make people feel helpless. Depression can impact one's self-esteem, tear apart families, and make them feel hopeless about the future.

**Acceptance**—Eventually most people enter the acceptance stage, where they come to grips with their layoff and start planning for the future.

How can you help fellow employees who may be struggling with changes?

- *Listen*—Most people just want to feel listened to, show respect and caring.
- *Empathize*—Acknowledge the person's feelings and show understanding for what the person is going through.
- *Support*—Explain your specific service to the person and offer other support resources. Create and provide a resources list. This may include resume writing, counseling services, other employment services, financial assistance services, etc.
- *Stay within Your Scope*—While you can certainly lend an empathetic ear, be sure you don't get into a therapist-client relationship or offer services outside of your professional scope.
- *Be a Role Model*—While you certainly don't want to be over-the-top cheerful (that can be insulting to an upset person), you do want to role model a positive attitude.
- *Don't Take it Personally*—While their hurt feelings/anger/sadness/etc. may be misdirected at you, it's important to remember that you are not the cause for their distress and to remain calm.
- *Safety First*—Always make your personal safety top priority. Should you face a really angry/threatening employee, consult a supervisor, call security.

*Methodist EAP professionals can assist you and/or your family members during difficult times. For a private, confidential meeting contact Methodist EAP at (402) 354-8000 or (800) 666-8606.*



## Life Insurance Update

Full-time, and most part-time, State employees are eligible for basic life insurance, supplemental life insurance, dependent life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment insurance through the State sponsored benefit program. This may be a good time to review your coverage and make sure your employer-sponsored benefit, along with your personal coverage, is meeting your family needs, obligations and expectations.

Key items to review may include the face amount of life insurance

policies, beneficiary information and details of the coverage. Many policies, both group and individual plans, have exclusions or limitations you need to be aware of. For example, the State sponsored life insurance program contains an "Actively at Work" provision. This provision, in simple terms, may require you to convert your insurance coverage to an individual policy if you are away from work for an extended period of time. The Actively at Work provision may apply even if you are on approved paid leave.

Let's face it, when we're looking for ways to enjoy our precious free time, reviewing insurance policies is not high on the list. However, proper planning is vitally important to meeting long term goals and providing financial stability for family and loved ones. Make sure you fully understand your insurance coverages.

If you have questions regarding the State sponsored life insurance benefit, or other State sponsored benefits, please contact your agency Human Resource person for further information.

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## Bioterrorism in the United States

Richard A. Raymond, M.D.

Chief Medical Officer

Nebraska Health and Human Services System

Americans have been changed by the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11. Our country's peace of mind has been disturbed. Anxiety levels are high, according to a national survey recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The survey found that four out of every ten Americans have reported serious stress in the days following the attacks.

Anxiety levels continue to be high because of the discovery of anthrax in the mail and in postal facilities, with a few cases of personal infection. Because of that, some people report trepidation about every piece of mail they receive. Others become alarmed at any white powder anywhere, resulting in reports to authorities of cases that turn out to be coffee creamer or cornstarch powder.

We should keep bioterrorism in perspective. For the vast majority of the citizens of the U.S., the anthrax threat is very small. We are much more likely to die as the consequence of smoking, eating fatty foods, or not buckling our seat belts.

Consider these facts:

- Tobacco is the leading cause of death in Nebraska. It causes about eight deaths in the state every day, more than accidents, HIV/AIDS, fires, murder and alcohol combined.
- Accidents are the fifth leading cause of death here, causing over 600 deaths last year. Some of these are preventable—falls, drowning, and car crashes. Focusing health education programs on these could make a difference.
- Heart disease killed over 4,000 Nebraskans last year, a number that could be changed by smoking cessation, a low-fat and high-fiber diet, and exercise.
- Each year 20,000 people in the U.S. die from the complications of influenza, but only two-thirds of Americans over age 65 (a high risk group) get flu shots that could prevent the disease.
- Over 7,000 people in the nation die each year from bacterial pneumonia, something that could be prevented by a one-time vaccination.
- Even a lightning strike is more likely to end an American life than anthrax.

In Nebraska, as of November 30, there have been no confirmed or suspected cases of bioterrorism due to anthrax infection or contamination, but there is evidence of bioterrorism. Bioterrorism is terror that is a result of a biological agent. In the case of anthrax, the "bio" part is small but the "terrorism" component is huge. Public health and the medical community will take care of the biological element; we must help contain the terror by keeping risk in perspective.

Anthrax was a disease unfamiliar to most people just three short months ago. If we recognize that anthrax is not contagious by person-to-person transmission and is treatable with easily obtainable antibiotics, our anxiety level will be in line with reality.

The State of Nebraska and the federal government are doing everything possible to prepare for and respond to terrorist acts. Starting in September 1999, Nebraska began upgrading its Public Health Laboratory to a Level 3, allowing the state to handle suspected anthrax and most other

*continued on page 3*





## ITFair

November 6, 2001 marked the second production of the NE ITFair. The fair was held in conjunction with the eGovernment Conference this year and was a resounding success. This year marked the addition of several new presenters. The 34 tables of presenters included: the Arts Council, Assistive Technology Partnership, City of Lincoln, Game and Parks, IMServices, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Department of Roads, Nebraska@ Online, State Auditor, University of Nebraska, Workers Compensation Court, and Workforce Development (DOL). Information about presentations can be obtained by using the Internet at [http://imsquickplace.ims.state.ne.us/nebr\\_it\\_fair](http://imsquickplace.ims.state.ne.us/nebr_it_fair) and pictures of the event can be seen at <http://www.ims.state.ne.us/ITFair/110601/>. Fair traffic this year was estimated at well over 300 individuals with many (92%) learning about new technology that may help in their organizations and a majority (71%) indicating they will be pursuing these new technologies.

The eGovernment portion of the fair featured a number of speakers and panel discussions. Governor Johanns made opening remarks. Speaker Carolyn Purcell, Executive Director, State of Texas Department of Information Resources, talked about IT's evolving role in government from the 50s until now. She discussed how the Internet plays a crucial role in the delivery of sophisticated e-government to citizens. She also addressed

some about the impact of 9/11 and the National Electronic Commerce Coordinating Council (NECCC).

Another featured speaker, Robert E. Sweeney, President and CEO of the Applied Information Management Institute addressed how the basic economic factors of labor, knowledge and geography have changed substantially from the agricultural through the industrial and now the information age. Labor has changed from physical strength through repetitive task and now is brainpower rather than brawn. Knowledge has moved from ag-specific, through on-the-job training and now into knowing how to use and apply information technology. Geography in the ag era was almost entirely local, then regional in the industrial era, and is now global in the information age. The driving force of the new era is digitalization of the world's knowledge & information and expectations of government agencies will change dramatically as a result.

This event effectively presented security and other eGovernment issues, eGovernment initiatives, Nebraska success stories, payment solutions for electronic transactions, and allowed attendees to address issues and learn about new technologies directly in face to face discussions and demonstrations. Next years eGovernment Conference/ITFair promises to be even more informative. For information about being part of the event next year or more information contact Casey Tyler at [catyler@notes.state.ne.us](mailto:catyler@notes.state.ne.us) or 471-3559.

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### Bioterrorism *continued*

agents of bioterrorism. Nebraska is one of 23 labs in the nation who have such capability.

We also began to increase our surveillance and epidemiological capabilities. We hired a bioterrorism surveillance coordinator to work with state and local agencies. We partnered with our two largest county health departments to add infectious disease epide-

miologists to their staff who would be available to assist in an infectious disease investigation, if needed, in rural Nebraska. On September 11, 2001, we initiated the Health Alert Network which enables us to communicate with health care providers, local health departments, community action agencies and others as quickly as possible via fax or e-mail.

Keeping the facts in mind, rational thought and actions will win the day. We don't want to let unfounded fears get the best of us. That would mean that the terrorists are winning in a game that is more psychological than physical.

*This letter originally appeared in the Lincoln Journal Star, November 30, 2001.*



## IIF

The next IIF (Interactive Informational Forum) will be held:  
Tuesday, March 12th, 2002

Location:

Lancaster County Extension  
444 Cherrycreek Rd  
Lincoln NE 68524

- NIS Team: An HR project update and opportunity to ask questions.
- "SuperVision" A NEW Leadership Development opportunity.
- Duncan Aviation: One of the 100 BEST companies to work for in America  
Melanie Ways, HR manager with Duncan Aviation: Discusses her companies  
HR philosophy and how they demonstrate and encourage leadership
- Hello from Toastmasters
- Hot Topic roundtable discussions

These meetings are a chance for Human Resource professionals to share  
new ideas and encourage others.



## File Electronically

Electronically file your individual income tax return for tax year 2001

The Department of Revenue encourages all Nebraskans to consider using electronic filing (E-File) for their 2001 Nebraska and federal individual income tax returns. When you get ready to file your tax returns this year, you can learn more about your E-File options by visiting the department's Web site at <http://www.revenue.state.ne.us>. Write this address down for future reference. Once at the department's Web site, just click on E-Filing to see what filing option is best for you. Some options are free, depending on eligibility. Electronic filing has the advantage of receiving a faster refund (7-10 business days), compared to the possible 3 months for a paper return. E-File is convenient (no paper or post office trip), easy to use, and gives you the security of a confirmation number to know your return has been received. Thank you for considering E-File.

## Life Saving Nurse

On December 4th, Loy Rossel (the Company Care Nurse that attends the Nurses Station in the NSOB), discovered a problem with someone she was assisting, while doing a routine blood pressure check. She recommended this person see his doctor immediately. The diagnosis was a major blockage in the arteries surrounding his heart and successful surgery was performed.

The family of this gentleman came from Omaha to personally thank Loy for what they feel was life saving advice. Loy received a beautiful bouquet of flowers from the family gave her. The children and grandchildren are thankful to have their grandfather.



## Easter Celebration

Easter is a happy time, a time to celebrate the coming of spring and the new life that's all around us in the flowers, trees, animals and birds. Along with the deep religious meaning, it's also an occasion for gifts and games, and may of these involve Easter eggs. The egg has always been a symbol of new life, and people have believed that eggs given at this season would bring good luck. It's been a custom to color, decorate and exchange eggs for hundreds of years.

Many stories and traditions have grown up around the Easter egg. In Switzerland, children are supposed to receive their eggs from a bird, the Easter cuckoo (after all, that's the land of the cuckoo clock). People in central European countries have a long tradition of elaborately decorated Easter eggs. Polish, Slavic and Ukrainian people create amazingly intricate designs on the eggs. One of several Easter traditions followed by most countries and carried to America by German settlers was the fable that the Easter bunny delivered colored eggs for good children, and most countries follow the old German fable.

### Decorating Ideas

Coloring eggs can be more fun if you try new and

different designs along with solid colors. How about a plaid egg, or a striped one? For this effect, wrap eggs with rubber bands or strips of narrow masking tape before placing them in the dye. Be sure the egg is completely dry before removing the bands. Try personalizing the egg by writing on it with a light-colored crayon before coloring it. For designs from nature, choose small leaves or pieces of fern, and wrap them around the egg with a piece of nylon net or an old stocking before coloring it. Use natural dyes made from

items you may already have in your refrigerator such as beets, spinach leaves, cranberries, blueberries, red cabbage, just to name a few of the possibilities.

While eggs are good eating at any time, Easter is the season to enjoy them as gifts and special treats.

### Salads with Eggs

Celebrate Egg Salad Week the week after Easter with some easy and elegant salads, deviled eggs, egg salad sandwiches, or a vegetable egg spread using hard-cooked eggs. When left in their shells, hard-cooked eggs will remain edible for one week. As long as the eggs are not out

of refrigeration over two hours, they will be safe to eat.

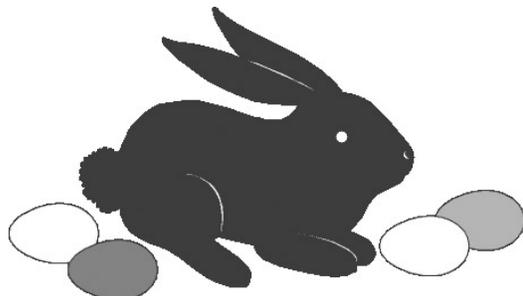
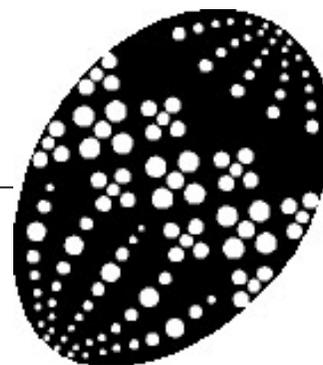
For perfect hard-cooked eggs, we have the recipe and tips for you. Keep in mind that the fresher the egg, the harder it is to peel. Try to buy your eggs a week or two in advance and refrigerate them. Enjoy this delicious and easy-to-make deviled eggs recipe, and have the kids help out and join in the fun.

### Deviled Delight

(12 pieces)

- |    |                        |   |                                |
|----|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 6  | Hard-cooked eggs       | 1 | T. honey                       |
| 1  | T. Dijon-style mustard | 1 | T. minced onions               |
| 1  | T. yellow mustard      | 1 | T. minced sweet pickles        |
| 1½ | T. low-fat mayonnaise  |   | Paprika, as needed for garnish |

Peel the eggs and cut in half lengthwise. Remove yolks and set whites aside. Place hard-cooked yolks and the rest of the ingredients in a medium sized plastic bag, press out air. Seal the bag and mash the egg mixture until it is well blended. Push mixture toward one corner. Cut about ½ inch off the corner of the bag. Squeeze the bag gently and fill the egg whites with yolk mixture. Chill or serve immediately.



For more free egg recipes, egg decorating tips, or information related to eggs and food safety, please contact Mary Torell, Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Poultry & Egg Division at [mtorell2@unl.edu](mailto:mtorell2@unl.edu) or call 402-472-0752.





## State Recycling News

### #10 Steel Can Program Boosts State Recycling

Steel Cans are found in many state food service facilities. The most common are the one-gallon #10 Steel Cans. Steel Cans, lids and closures are recyclable and should be recycled. In fact, all steel products are recyclable, and about 64% of the steel produced in the United States is recycled.

In the summer of 2001, the State Of Nebraska Recycling Office introduced the #10 Steel Can to its program. Since then the cooperation of participating locations and their efforts have shown outstanding results. Since July of 2000, the participating facilities have combined to recycle 59,680 pounds of #10 Steel Cans.

By recycling steel cans we not only provide the steel industry with a much-needed resource, you also divert material from the landfill, help save energy and preserve precious domestic natural resources. Thank you to all who participate. For more information on #10 Steel Can recycling, contact the State Of Nebraska Recycling Office.

### Steel Facts

- Every day, Americans use enough steel and tin cans to make a steel pipe running from Los Angeles to New York and back.
- 97% of all steel cans are used for food.
- The average American uses 142 steel cans per year.
- Americans throw away enough iron and steel to continuously supply the nation's auto makers.
- Every ton of recycled steel saves 2,500 pounds of iron ore, 1,000 of coal, 40 pounds of limestone, and 2.3 cubic yards of landfill.

State of Nebraska participating government facilities have combined to save the following by recycling #10 Steel Cans in the past 6 months alone:

- 74,600 pounds of iron ore
- 29,840 pounds of coal
- 1,194 pounds of limestone
- 68.6 cubic yards of landfill space

### Aluminum Can Update

2,140 pounds or 1.07 tons of Aluminum cans have been collected and recycled throughout State Office Buildings in fiscal year 2002.

#### Nebraska State Recycling

5001 South 14th St.  
PO Box 94901  
Lincoln, NE 68509

#### State Recycling Coordinator

Charlie Wink  
Phone (402) 471-2431  
Fax (402) 471-2889  
cwink@notes.state.ne.us

#### State Recycling Clerk

Beki Maahs  
Phone (402) 471-9162  
Fax (402) 471-2889  
bmaahs@notes.state.ne.us

### State of Nebraska Recycling Efforts FY 2002

FY 2001	Tons Recycled	Number of Trees Saved	kWh of Energy Saved	Gal/Water Saved	Cu yd. Paper Diverted/Landfill	Pounds of air Pollution Eliminated
Jul	85.12	1,447.04	348,992	595,840	280.90	5,107.20
Aug	89.50	1,521.50	366,950	626,500	295.35	5,370.00
Sep	59.11	1,004.87	242,351	413,770	195.06	3,546.60
Oct	94.24	1,602.08	386,384	659,680	310.99	5,654.40
Nov	100.26	1,704.42	411,066	701,820	330.86	6,015.60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>428.23</b>	<b>7,279.91</b>	<b>1,755,743</b>	<b>2,997,610</b>	<b>1,413.16</b>	<b>25,693.80</b>



## Statewide Safety Committee

### Mission

*“To promote a safe and healthy work environment for all Nebraska state employees”*

A growing concern in the Midwest is the illegal manufacturing of methamphetamine in clandestine laboratories. These labs have been found in various places throughout the state of Nebraska. An off-duty Department of Roads worker in the North Platte area came across such a lab while hunting. State employees from many areas could be exposed to the dangers of such labs.

Nebraska State Patrol officers, Department of Environmental Quality employees, State Fire Marshals, and various investigators and inspectors are just a few of those who could come in contact with a meth lab operation while conducting their work. Many of the chemicals used in the production of methamphetamine are toxic and volatile. They can be a hazard to anyone coming in contact with the gases produced by the cooking method. Fires and explosions are also common concerns.

How do you recognize a drug lab? There are indicators too numerous to mention, but here are a few clues to consider:

- The mixing of chemicals in a house, barn, garage, or van by persons not involved in the chemical industry
- Late night secretive activity in a rural/farm area
- The possession of chemical glassware by someone not involved in the chemical field.
- Possession of unusual, or large quantities of, chemicals such as; Camp Stove Fuel, Acetone, Anhydrous Ammonia, Ether, Iodine Crystals, Muriatic or Sulfuric Acid, Red Phosphorous, Cold and Allergy medications or Diet Aids containing Ephedrine

If you suspect that you may be exposed to an illegal drug lab, do not place yourself in danger. Leave the scene, notify your supervisor, and if warranted, notify the local authorities. Your safety and that of your coworkers should be of the first concern.

Safety at work is the responsibility of management and labor alike. Keep yourself and your fellow employees safe by making workplace safety a priority. If you would like additional information on any safety concerns, or if you would like to join the committee, please contact a member of your agency safety committee or the Statewide Safety Committee. The current members of the Statewide Safety Committee are:

Labor (appointed by NAPE/AFSCME)	Management (appointed by the Governor)
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Dawn Kowal, Co-chair  
(402)595-3171  
dkowal@dol.state.ne.us

Mike Samuelson, Co-chair  
(402)223-7541  
Msamuels@notes.state.ne.us

Bob Basoco  
Kevin Petska  
Deanna Ewing  
Karen Girch

David Gates  
Dale Busch  
Bob Lundberg  
Joe Hamblin  
Ron Henning  
Randy Roberts

## Save Money— Fight Pollution

The Department of Environmental Quality's Pollution Prevention Team wants to inform you about steps you can take to prevent pollution. Starting with this article, our goal is to give you information, tips and suggestions focusing on how to reduce pollution. Some of these ideas will save you money and time. So here is our first tip: consider using a programmable thermostat.

A thermostat is a temperature-sensitive switch that controls a furnace, air conditioner, or both. You can save energy in the winter by setting the thermostat to 68° F (20° C) when you're at home and awake, and lowering it when you're asleep or away. In the summer, when you are not home you can save energy by letting the house or apartment heat up (78° F) and cooling it off just before you get home. Programmable thermostats will automatically adjust the temperature for you. Saving energy prevents pollution and saves you money.

For additional Pollution Prevention information and a listing of other informative sites, go to the DEQ web site at [www.deq.state.ne.us](http://www.deq.state.ne.us) and select NDEQ Programs/Environmental Assistance Program/Pollution Prevention Program.



## Observer Online

The Statehouse Observer can be viewed online in .pdf form at <http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/observer.htm>. You will need at least version 4.0 of Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you prefer not to receive the Observer in printed form please contact your agency's Special Project Coordinator (listed below) so they can reduce their number of copies ordered.

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Game & Parks Commission .....	Mark Brohman	Status of Women Commission .....	Carlene Bourn
Governor's Energy Office .....	Cindy Kurth	Tax Equalization & Review Commission.....	Janet L. Edwards
Governor's Office.....	Cherri Carpenter	Treasurer's Office.....	Lorelee Byrd
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Health & Human Services System .....	Kathy Roza	Workers' Compensation Court.....	Linda Malfait

## Mark Your Calendar!

### February

- 18 Presidents' Day  
*State Holiday*
- 20 Safety Fair  
Rotunda - State Capitol

### March

- 1 Nebraska Statehood
- 12 IIF  
Lancaster County Extension  
444 Cherrycreek Rd

### April

- 26 Arbor Day  
*State Holiday*

### May

- 27 Memorial Day  
*State Holiday*

## STATEHOUSE OBSERVER

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*Partnering with Agencies,  
our State Personnel Team  
is transforming State Government  
to be the employer of choice.*

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