



Georgetown County Government Employee Newsletter

Lessons Learned

Tips from the Risk Manager

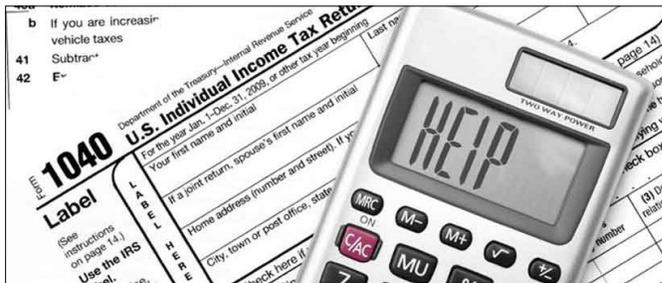
Safe holiday decorating tips

'Tis the season for holiday decorating. But while decorations are fun and festive, they can also cause serious problems if not handled properly. Here are some safety tips for a safe, happy holiday season.

- Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes or any potentially flammable item.
- When spraying artificial snow on windows and other surfaces, be sure to follow directions carefully. These sprays can irritate your lungs if you inhale them.
- Stand your Tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.
- If you use an artificial tree, choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors. Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and loose connections. Replace or repair any damaged light sets.
- Use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the walls to avoid tripping hazards, but do not run cords under rugs, around furniture legs or across

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Program to offer free help with tax filing, look for details in 2017



The Black River United Way is currently recruiting volunteers for its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. The program will assist community residents who need help with their tax returns, and Georgetown County Human Resources wants to make employees aware so they can take advantage of the program if they need help.

The group says millions of dollars in Earned Income Tax Credit refunds go unclaimed annually. These volunteers will help people make sure they're getting back all the money they should.

Dates and locations for where help will be offered have not been finalized, but look for more details at the beginning of next year. Happy holidays!

New tools to help you understand your benefits

Public employees now have a new tool to help them find their way in the complicated world of insurance and retirement benefits.

On Dec. 5, the S.C. Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA) launched "Navigating your benefits, a multimedia campaign to provide common-language explanations for unfamiliar benefits concepts, bringing together fliers, videos and social media on an array of topics.

The first messages in the series will cover such areas as dental insurance, prescription coverage reviews and comparing State Health Plan options. The series will grow and adapt going forward as PEBA addresses sources of confusion and concern.

If you have suggestions for the series or would like more information, contact the Georgetown County Human Resources Department.

Congratulations to our Door Decorating Contest winners!



The competition in our door decorating contest this year was fierce! We had 19 entries and some of our competitors went all out. Winners were the Administration office, above, 1st place; the Clerk of Court staff, top right, 2nd place; and the front desk at Parks and Recreation, 3rd place.



Lessons Learned

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doorways. This can be a fire hazard.

- Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Unplug extension cords when not in use.
- If using a natural tree, make sure it is well watered to avoid dry branches catching fire from the heat of the lights.
- When displaying outdoor lights, fasten them firmly to a secure support with insulated staples or hooks to avoid wind damage. Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.

Ladder Safety:

- When putting up holiday decorations, always use the proper step stool or ladder to reach high places. Don't stand on chairs, desks or other furniture.
- If you have to use a step ladder near a doorway, lock or barricade the door and post signs so no one will open it and knock you off the ladder.
- A straight or extension ladder should be placed one foot away from the surface it rests against for every four feet of ladder height.
- When you climb, always face the ladder and grip the rungs to climb — not the side rails. Always keep three points of contact on the ladder whether two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.
- When climbing, keep your hips between the side rails and do not lean too far or overreach. Reposition the ladder closer to the work instead.
- Use ladders with slip-resistant feet and wear clean, dry and slip-resistant shoes when climbing a ladder.
- When using ladders outdoors, get down immediately if high winds, rain, snow or other inclement weather begins. Winds can blow you off the ladder and rain or snow can make the rungs and ground slippery.

Submitted by **Holley Causey,**
Risk Manager

We've got spirit, how 'bout you?

The Georgetown County Morale Committee will introduce monthly Spirit Days beginning in 2017. With a different theme each month, these events will offer an opportunity for employees to have fun while they work.

Georgetown County Administration and Human Resources would like to thank the members of the Morale Committee for all they do for our employees and their commitment to making this a great place to work!

Thinking about retirement?

Retirement is one of the biggest decisions you will ever make in your life. Make sure you follow the steps that will be most beneficial to you. If you're considering retirement, please come by the Human Resources Department and discuss your retirement with staff **in advance** of retiring.

They're here to help and can take you through those important steps so that you get the most out of your retirement.

Congratulations, award winners!



Mike Young,
Manager of the Year



George Avant Jr.,
Employee Volunteer of the Year



Bill Dougan,
Employee of the Quarter

We're always excited when we can recognize employees for a job well done, and this month we were able to recognize three of them for outstanding performance.

Mike Young, our Building Official, was named Manager of the Year. Mike has been employed with the county for 16 years and at the beginning of this year was promoted from Senior Building Inspector to his current position. In that time he has made several significant improvements that benefit the Building Division as well as county residents. Among the most noticeable of those for the public, he led the effort to improve the County's national Flood Insurance Program rating from an 8 to a 7. This improvement will result in a 5 percent decrease in flood insurance premiums for county residents. He is already working on additional actions to further improve the rating.

Mike also led the most successful damage assessment process to date this fall after Hurricane Matthew.

He has made many improvements in a very short time and proven he was the right pick for this job, said his director Boyd Johnson.

George Avant Jr., an employee of the Georgetown County Public Services Department, received the Employee Volunteer of the Year award, which recognizes county employees who also volunteers their time and service to one of the county's many departments and divisions outside the course of their regular job.

George came to work for the County 22 years ago, but was volunteering for the Emergency Services Department decades before that, and continues to do so to this day.

He works daily on special projects in the Public Works Division and after clocking out, volunteers with Georgetown County Fire/EMS. He is dedicated to both roles and his passion for the fire department has never negatively impacted his work in the Public Works Division. He may be called to an accident scene in the wee hours of the night, but will still be on time and at his best

when he reports to work the next morning, said Public Services Director Ray Funnys. He devotes significant time to training required for this volunteer position. It is his passion and he takes it seriously. He is very generous with his time, very dedicated and very proud of Georgetown County Fire/EMS.

Bill Dougan, a firefighter/paramedic with Midway Fire Rescue, was named Employee of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2016. He has been employed with the department for four years. Bill was nominated for the award by the leadership at Midway Fire Rescue. In addition to the normal duties of a firefighter/paramedic, he is an instructor for the department's EMS in-service training and for DHEC's required continuing education program for fire/rescue staff.

He has developed a reputation as a strong, informal leader who is always teaching others and has a tactful, helpful manner.

He often provides useful input that helps enhance shift and department operations, and he works well with all senior leadership to accomplish goals.

His teaching manner is not only confident, but he has an ability to make otherwise dull topics relatable and relevant, and keep his students engaged. His method of teaching builds confidence and skills in new hires.

For his excellent work, Bill was also selected as the Emergency Services Department's Employee of the Quarter this quarter and was previously named Midway's Paramedic of the Year in January 2015.

Georgetown County introduced the Employee of the Quarter award and annual Manager of the Year and Employee Volunteer of the Year Awards in 2013. Employees are nominated by department directors and voted on by a panel of directors and the County Administrator.

Please join us in congratulating these outstanding employees and thanking them for their hard work and a job well done. We look forward to recognizing more employees in 2017!