

Overhauling Claims Management

by Haley Jorgensen

A recent claims management overhaul designed to enhance communication between claims adjusters and Republic Services Inc. personnel throughout the United States, has yielded positive results in less than a year. The new claims management initiative serves as the foundation for much broader company goals to reduce claim costs.

Thanks to the new approach to claims management, Republic Services hopes to lower claim costs by returning injured employees to work sooner, closing claims faster, and ultimately, analyzing claims data to initiate safety and loss prevention programs to prevent injuries in the future.

Less than a year ago, Republic Services contracted with CCMSI, a third-party claims management provider, to provide risk and claims management services in an effort to improve claims processes and communication. Together, the two entities engaged in a collaborative effort to improve Republic Services' claims management program.

As the corporate claims manager at Republic Services, Dwayne Hart works with CCMSI and the attorneys that handle litigation. He is also involved with ensuring that claims are accurately handled in accordance with stringent internal and external guidelines. Each division is allocated funds for the costs incurred from workers compensation or auto claims, which account for 95% of Republic Services' exposure. It is not always easy to determine what a claim might cost without quality communication between the claims adjuster and Republic Services personnel, he says.

"We wanted to improve communication and establish 24/7 access to claims data so more people within Republic Services had access to the information," says Hart. "Without communication between the claims adjuster and local Republic Services people, our staff didn't always know all the details of a claim and what the adjuster was doing behind the scenes."

By not knowing all of the details surrounding a claim, Hart maintains, it is more difficult to return injured employees to work, especially in a modified or light-duty position. "The more information you have, the better off everybody is going to be, and the quicker the injured person gets to a doctor, gets well, goes into modified duty and then is transitioned to work in their regular position," says Hart.

Together, CCMSI and Republic Services engaged in an eight-month initiative to improve claims and risk management. The first step to accomplish better claims management was to improve communication between adjusters and safety personnel on the local level. "One of the things CCMSI offered was access to claims through their iCE portal," says Hart. iCE is a web-based proprietary claims-reporting and data-analysis software developed by CCMSI exclusively for clients. It was initially developed to offer more benefits than other applications on the market, including state and OSHA reporting components. Because it is owned, managed and continuously improved in-house at CCMSI, the software can be customized to meet the individual needs of clients, according to Charles Wattigny, vice president of national accounts at CCMSI.

Together, Republic Services and CCMSI worked to adjust the iCE reporting portal to better suit the specific needs of Republic Services. "We discovered we needed to be able to report and track both auto liability claims and workers comp claims, while linking all costs to our allocation system," says Hart. The new portal allows Republic Services to collect all information regarding accidents and injuries—making claims management more efficient.

"We've gained more aggressive claims handling because everyone is working together," says Hart. Thanks to electronic submission and improved communication, claims are closed sooner and more efficiently. But, he says, that is just the tip of the iceberg.

"We are concentrating on the modified, light-duty position and why it is beneficial," he says. "It gets them back to work using muscles, as opposed to sitting at home deteriorating. It's a win-win scenario."

Before, Republic Services managers simply did not have access to all of the information they needed to return people to work. Now they do. ■

Haley Jorgensen is the owner of Public Image, a public relations and marketing firm in Ripon, Wisconsin.

July 2007



RISK MANAGEMENT

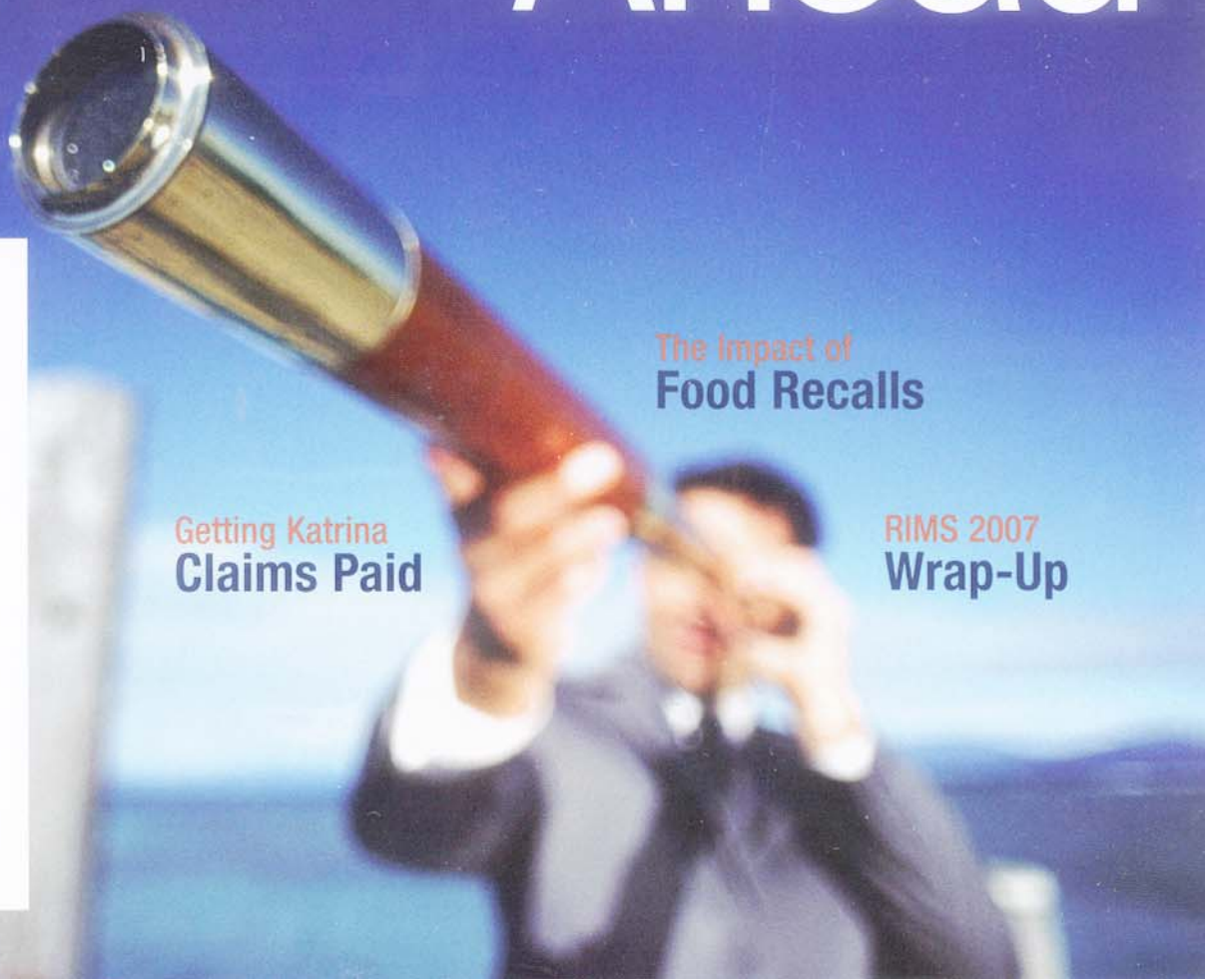
A PUBLICATION OF THE RISK AND INSURANCE MANAGEMENT SOCIETY, INC.

M A G A Z I N E

Looking

P/C Insurance at Mid-Year

Ahead



The Impact of
Food Recalls

Getting Katrina
Claims Paid

RIMS 2007
Wrap-Up