

# Safety at Work: An Emotional Issue



By [Dan Bookham](#)

For [WorkBoat Magazine](#)

Workplace safety is not merely a physical concern but also a complex emotional issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals, teams, and organizations. A comprehensive approach to workplace safety must address emotional factors, otherwise it is doomed to fail. A hearts-and-minds approach to keeping your people safe is always going to pay more dividends than folks dutifully checking boxes without investment in the philosophy behind your safety culture.

Should this all seem a bit too touchy-feely, consider the following. Safety at work is undeniably an emotional issue because the very human drivers of connection and fear underpin the decisions we make every day that could potentially imperil life and limb.

On the individual level, this translates to a basic fear of loss. The fear of injury, illness or even death is inherent to human nature. This fear can be paralyzing or motivating, depending on how it is managed. We also worry about teammates,

as employees often form strong bonds with coworkers, creating a sense of family and community. The safety of colleagues becomes a deeply personal matter, driven by love and care. More than anything else, the instinct to protect oneself is primal. When safety is compromised, it triggers strong emotional responses related to survival and well-being which can set off a chain reaction of events that can amplify risks as much as lessen them.

Unsafe work environments can lead to chronic stress and anxiety, affecting employees' mental health and overall quality of life, and the experience of trauma – for both an injured individual and their colleagues who were present – can have lasting impacts and cause employees to lose trust in their employer and feel a diminished sense of control over their work environment. This in turn can lead to a doom loop of anger and frustration which fuel reckless behavior, increased risk-taking, and reduced attention to safety protocols.

While negative emotions can spread rapidly through a workplace, creating a climate of fear and distrust which can hinder safety efforts, positive emotions are even more contagious and can boost morale, increase engagement, and promote a proactive approach to safety. When a team feels it in their bones a supportive and collaborative safety culture meets their emotional needs in the workplace, we see improved communication, conflict resolution and decision-making, all of which are powerful force-multipliers when it comes to reducing harm.

Emotions are a powerful force that can either enhance or hinder workplace safety. By understanding the impact of emotions, organizations can develop strategies to create a positive and safe work environment. Exploring and developing specific strategies that help you understand, manage and mitigate the impact of emotion on safety culture in partnership with your

workers comp, USLH and P&I insurers is a smart way to benefit from the premium dollars you pay for your policies.

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# Understanding and Protecting Your Purchasing Power

Imagine walking into your local grocery store with a \$20 bill. Last year, that might have bought you a gallon of milk, a dozen eggs, and a loaf of bread with change to spare. Today, those same items could cost noticeably different amounts and \$20 may not cover as much. This everyday experience demonstrates the concept of purchasing power—how much your money can actually buy. Understanding this concept helps you make smarter financial decisions and grow the value of your funds over time.

## What Shapes Your Money's Value?

Your purchasing power changes as the economy changes, influenced by various economic factors. Inflation and purchasing power are inversely related—when prices rise, the amount of goods and services you can purchase with the same amount of money decreases. And, conversely, when prices decrease, you can buy more.

Think about buying a car. The same \$30,000 that bought a well-equipped sedan five years ago might only buy a basic model today. Or consider housing—monthly rent that was \$1,500 a few years ago might now be \$2,000 for the same apartment.

Understanding purchasing power isn't just about watching prices go up and down, however. It's about learning how economic

changes affect both your spending and saving strategies. This helps you make smarter decisions to protect your money's value in the years to come.

## **Making Your Savings Work for You**

One way to counter inflation and preserve purchasing power is through smart savings choices. Traditional savings accounts offer accessibility, but interest rates can vary widely. High-yield savings accounts, for example, often provide significantly better returns than standard accounts, while government securities, such as Treasury bills or savings bonds, offer other secure savings options.

For instance:

- If you had \$10,000 in a regular savings account earning just 0.1% annually, after five years, you'd earn around \$50 in interest.
- By contrast, in a high-yield savings account earning 4% annually, you'd earn about \$2,166 in total interest over the same period.

A financial advisor can help you explore savings options that best fit your goals, making it easier to protect your purchasing power over time.

## **Planning for a Comfortable Retirement**

When planning for retirement, understanding purchasing power becomes especially important. A lifestyle that costs \$50,000 per year today will likely cost a different amount in the future. Similarly, what you can buy with a \$1 million retirement fund today will not equal what you can buy with the same amount 25 years from now.

Your spending patterns in retirement usually shift over time:

- **Early Retirement:** Often marked by discretionary spending on travel and hobbies.
- **Mid-Retirement:** A time when housing needs may shift, perhaps toward downsizing.
- **Late Retirement:** Typically, expenses for health care and support services increase.

Over a retirement that might last decades, changes in purchasing power could mean that what seems like ample savings now might cover far less in the future. A financial advisor can help you create a retirement strategy that aims to keep pace with rising costs, especially for essentials like health care.

### **Career Development and Income Potential**

Career growth is another way to help protect your purchasing power. For instance, if you start with a \$50,000 annual salary, adding certifications or new skills could boost that to \$75,000 or more—helping your income keep up with rising costs. Continuing education, professional certifications, and skill development allow you to stay competitive and command higher earnings. Side income from consulting or freelance work can also diversify and strengthen your income.

### **Building Long-Term Financial Security**

Protecting your purchasing power isn't about predicting economic trends; it's about staying prepared and adaptable. Understanding financial tools and regularly updating your strategy can make a significant difference.

### **Taking Action**

Start with these steps to better manage your purchasing power:

- **Track Key Prices:** Choose your top 10 most-purchased items, track their prices for six months, and adjust your budget

as needed.

- **Shop Around for Savings:** Check savings account interest rates every January to see if higher-yield options could help grow your savings.
- **Invest in Your Skills:** Identify certifications or training that could boost your earning power and set a timeline for earning them.
- **Adjust Your Budget Regularly:** Review your monthly budget each quarter to reflect changes in prices and spending patterns.
- **Meet with a Financial Advisor:** Review your long-term financial strategy on a regular basis to ensure that it keeps pace with changing economic conditions.

Taking small, consistent steps can build up to significant results over time. While you can't control the economy, you *can* take control of your financial future by staying informed and proactive.

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# Understanding Maine's Private Insurance Plans for Paid Family and Medical Leave: What You Need to Know Now

The Maine Department of Labor (DOL) has released the requirements for private insurance plans designed to replace the

state's Paid Family and Medical Leave program. Once these plans receive DOL approval, insurance companies will be able to present proposals to our customers.

At Allen, we are confident that insurance companies are actively initiating their filing processes. However, the state has yet to provide a timeline for the approval of these plans. We will keep our customers informed as developments occur.

In the meantime, we encourage you to connect with us for any insights or questions about planning for the PFML for your company.

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## **Society of Certified Insurance Counselors Honors Martha Wentworth for 20 Years of Dedicated Leadership and Professional Development**



[Martha Wentworth](#), CIC, CRM, CPRM, was recently recognized for professional leadership and advanced knowledge by the Society of Certified Insurance Counselors.

Martha was awarded a certificate of achievement recognizing 20 consecutive years of successfully maintaining the Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC) designation. The CIC designation requires an annual continuing education update ensuring that her education is always up-to-date and relevant.

Martha is a business insurance producer who serves clients across Maine from the Allen's Waterville office.

In addition to her CIC designations, Wentworth maintains the Certified risk Manager (CRM) and Certified Personal Risk Manager (CPRM) designations. She recently celebrated her 25th work anniversary with the company.

“The CIC program’s unwavering dedication to fostering professional excellence has set a high standard in our industry,” said Dan Bookham, senior vice president for business development at Allen. “Martha’s consistent pursuit of growth and development is truly inspiring, serving as a model for her colleagues within our company and across the Maine insurance community.”

**ABOUT THE CIC PROGRAM:** The CIC Program is nationally recognized as the premier continuing education program for insurance professionals, with programs offered in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, the Society of CIC is a not-for-profit organization and the founding program of The National Alliance for Insurance Education & Research.

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# Review Insurance Clauses Before Signing



By Chris Richmond

Originally Submitted to [WorkBoat Magazine](#)

We are often asked by our insureds to review the insurance clause in contracts they are asked to sign. All too often, unfortunately, the contracts have already been signed before we have a chance to review them. These contracts are often prepared by legal teams or pulled from the Internet. While it is important to have the legalities in a contract correct, it is equally as important to have the insurance aspects correct –and that is why a conversation with your agent is important before you sign on the dotted line.

A contract, when properly drawn and signed, can become an enforceable document. But for insurance purposes, just because you have signed the document does not mean that your insurance policy will react to it. Your insurance policy is also a legal contract, and the insurance company is only going to respond to the limits and conditions written out in your policy. It is important to make sure that the limits and conditions that you are insured for will meet the requirements in the contract you are signing.

In addition to limits there are often other stipulations that

need verification with your agent before signing. Waiver of Subrogation and hold harmless clauses are often inserted. While these can be very beneficial to the party making the request these types of requirements need to be approved by your insurance company beforehand. Contracts often include the words “any and all” when referring to risks covered. Your insurance policy most likely will not react to “any and all” claims made against it. Again, have these clauses reviewed beforehand.

If your contract only involves a vessel then any General Liability and Workers Compensation limits that are required will most likely not apply. Your hull and protection & indemnity policies will react to claims made against the boat. Getting the party who is requesting these limits to understand this can often be futile. This is when you should get your insurance agent involved to help sort out the wording and coverage issues.

Contracts are required for many reasons. A boiler plate contract most likely will not fit your unique situation. Contracts are also negotiable. It is wise to involve your insurance agent in this process before signing any contract.

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## **Welcoming Kirsten Pomeroy to Our Team**



Kirsten Pomeroy of Pittsfield has joined the team at Allen Insurance and Financial as a receptionist in the company's Waterville office.

Kirsten is a graduate of the University of Maine in Farmington; her previous work experience includes work as an insurance agent and a high school counselor. She renewed her Maine Property & Casualty license in November 2024.

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## **Checklist for Property Owners: Protect Your Business From Frozen Pipes**

Bitter temperatures can freeze pipes, creating catastrophic property losses and havoc in your life.

With proper winter weather preparation, you can minimize the impact of severe weather on your business.

Before winter weather occurs:

- Add emergency contacts to your emergency plan. Post the

list at all telephones, and make copies for all employees to keep with them.

- Plan for maintenance personnel to properly monitor buildings during cold snaps, upping site visits and checking unoccupied areas of buildings.
- Properly mark the location of hydrants and sprinkler system post indicator valves for easy clearing after heavy snow.
- Inspect all areas along the building's inside and outside perimeters to ensure they are sealed.
- Provide heat for dry-pipe sprinkler system enclosures.
- If space heaters are used as this heat source, keep them in good operating condition and away from combustible or flammable materials.
- Maintain roofs; repair leaks, secure flashing, clear debris from the roof's surface, drains and overflow scuppers.
- Check that gutters and downspouts are secured to buildings and clear of leaves and debris. If they iced over during a previous winter, consider properly installing heat trace to prevent major icicles and dams. Consult with a professional roofer to properly assess your situation.
- Make sure all building openings are weather-tight so they do not admit cold. During winter months:
  - Maintain building temperatures above 55 degrees, with adequate airflow to prevent freezing.
  - Make frequent visits to unoccupied and often overlooked areas: mechanical rooms on an outside wall, closets, space above a finished ceiling, stairways, open warehouse areas with large doors, pipes near glass windows and walls, vestibules and atrium areas.
  - Thaw piping, equipment or building systems that become frozen using extra heat and airflow.
  - Have qualified sprinkler contractors ensure that your

sprinkler system is properly repaired and operational before normal building operations are resumed. Never thaw pipes with open flames.

- Verify that all fire protection equipment is operating effectively and, if it is brought offline or damaged, have a qualified fire protection contractor repair and place the system back into service.

Arctic temperatures can have a dramatic effect on your building – and your livelihood. Regular maintenance and a winter weather plan can help you avoid its negative impact.

*Via Cincinnati Insurance Companies.*

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## **Are Subscriptions Draining Your Bank Account?**

You open your bank statement and notice a string of small charges you barely remember signing up for—a streaming service you signed up for during the pandemic, the meditation app you downloaded during a stressful week, and a digital magazine subscription you haven't read in months. When you added these on, each charge seemed minor. But over time, these subscriptions can add up, draining hundreds or even thousands of dollars from your account. That \$50 a month? That's \$600 yearly—enough for a weekend getaway or a solid contribution to your emergency fund. But the good news? Reclaiming control over your subscriptions is simpler than you might think.

### **The Subscription Landscape**

Today, our lives are filled with subscriptions. Besides the usual streaming services, companies now offer recurring payments for meal kits, pet supplies, beauty products, fitness programs, and even car features. While they all promise convenience, these ongoing charges can quickly add up and overwhelm your budget. Often, people don't realize the true cost of all these services combined.

## **Find Hidden Costs**

A great first step is to review your bank and credit card statements from the past three months. Look for any recurring charges, especially those tied to digital services and app stores, which can often hide under unfamiliar company names. Free trials that quietly transitioned into paid plans or annual subscriptions renewed without your notice are common.

To simplify this process, try using a dedicated credit card just for subscriptions. This keeps all charges in one place, making it easier to track your spending. You might also check whether your bank offers subscription-tracking tools, which are increasingly available through mobile apps.

## **The Auto-Renewal Trap**

Auto-renewal settings often work against your financial interests. Many companies rely on customers forgetting about renewal dates or finding cancellation processes too complicated. Disable auto-renewals when possible, and set calendar reminders five to seven days before renewal dates. This gives you a chance to review whether the service is still valuable and check for any price increases or free alternatives.

Subscription rules are becoming more consumer-friendly, too. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently finalized a "click to cancel" rule to make cancellations as easy as sign-ups. Under

this rule, companies, including gyms, streaming platforms, and cable providers, will need to offer cancellation options as simple as the sign-up process. This rule, expected to take effect sometime in early 2025, will help prevent consumers from feeling “tricked or trapped into subscriptions.” While some companies argue it’s an undue burden on their processes, the rule’s goal is clear: to empower you to regain control of your subscriptions and stop paying for services you don’t need.

### **Watch for Hidden Requirements**

Before purchasing a subscription, look into any required add-ons. That new fitness device may need a monthly app subscription to unlock basic features, or a tool you downloaded may be free only for the first month. To avoid unexpected fees, read the fine print, and consider these ongoing costs in your decision-making.

### **Find Free Alternatives**

Many paid subscriptions have great free alternatives. Your local library often provides free access to digital books, magazines, movies, and even some streaming services. Try these ideas for cutting subscription costs:

- Use shared family plans for streaming services rather than separate accounts
- Check out YouTube for free workouts instead of relying on paid fitness apps
- Look into your library’s digital catalog before paying for entertainment subscriptions

### **Take Action ASAP**

Take 15 minutes tonight to start a subscription audit. Create a simple list or spreadsheet of each service, noting its monthly cost, renewal date, and how often you use it. Cancel any

unnecessary subscriptions right away and remove your payment info to prevent future charges.

Next, calculate your total annual spending on subscriptions. This number is often surprising! Consider if that amount might be better directed to other financial goals, like building an emergency fund or saving for retirement. For services you keep, check for annual payment discounts, which can be more economical than monthly payments.

### **Build Better Habits**

Here's a helpful habit: wait 24 hours before signing up for any new subscription. This cooling-off period can help prevent impulse decisions. When you do subscribe to something new, set up a renewal reminder in your calendar so you'll remember to review it.

Convenience is great—but not when it drains your finances. By managing your subscriptions proactively, you can enjoy services that add real value to your life while keeping more money in your wallet. The key is to stay aware of where your money goes and ensure that every recurring charge serves your financial goals.

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**Food in every seat. Help for**

# every family. **Fill the Strand** is Jan. 20, 2025

On Monday, January 20, 2025 AIO Food and Energy Assistance will host its fifth **Fill The Strand** food and funds drive to benefit AIO's Food Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weekend Meal, and Diaper Assistance Programs. This event challenges the community to fill every seat in the historic theater with bags of food and funds for AIO's programs. AIO has raised over \$125,000 in the first four *Fill the Strand* events. In celebration of AIO's 35th anniversary in 2025 the goal for the fifth Fill the Strand event is to fill the theater seats 3 times and to raise \$35,000. The snow date is Monday, January 27.

“ With long, cold nights, **Fill the Strand** is a well-timed, important opportunity for AIO to refill shelves with food following the holidays. I love it because it is a community-wide event that serves as a great opportunity to teach children about food insecurity and helping neighbors in need.” says AIO Executive Director Alan Kearl. “Powered by **Allen Insurance and Financial** and hosted by the **Strand Theatre**, this event is a testament of a community that cares for one another. As many families face greater challenges making ends meet, AIO continues to keep pace with the need for food and energy assistance. In the past year, we have provided over 668,000 pounds of food through more than 14,000 visits to our pantry market. That is a 29% increase over last year's record-setting number of visits! **Fill The Strand** is vital to keeping food available for those who need it.”

Monetary donations are welcome – and in fact your dollar goes further since AIO can purchase food through partners at a competitive price. Individuals can fill one theater seat with a

bag of food or sponsor a seat at \$35. Your \$35 monetary donation can buy up to \$125 worth of food. Those interested in sponsoring a seat through a financial donation can donate online at [www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand](http://www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand).

Non-perishable food with a current expiration date is appreciated (no glass please). AIO would be grateful for donations of the most needed items including sauces and condiments, canned goods, toilet paper, personal care products, pasta, coffee & tea. Whether a monetary gift or food donation – your support will help the people in our community who need it the most.

Food collection sites have been established at area businesses, including Allen Insurance and Financial offices (Rockland and Camden), the Strand Theatre, First National Bank (Rockland branches), South End Grocery (Rockland), Camden National Bank (Rockland), The Grasshopper Shop (Rockland), Rock City Coffee (Rockland), Mid Coast Credit Union (Rockland) and AIO Food and Energy Assistance (Rockland). On **Monday, January 20th** volunteers will be at the Strand Theatre between 9:00-2:00pm to receive food and funds donations. Drive-up and drop-off service will be available or come in the Strand Theatre, located at 345 Main Street, Rockland, to deliver your food and funds donations.

AIO is proud to partner with two business leaders who are instrumental in making the ***Fill the Strand*** event possible – The Strand Theatre who hosts the event and Allen Insurance and Financial who helps power the event, through their financial support, as well as a team of employees who volunteer during the day of the event in greeting donors, collecting and organizing donations.

AIO is grateful to the generous support of its sponsors which include, at the **Leadership level** – First National Bank and First

National Wealth Management, Rockland Plaza and Frantz Furniture Showroom. At the **Partner level** – Gartley & Dorsky, The Inn at Ocean’s Edge, 250 Main Hotel, Knights of Columbus Limerock Council 136, Cates Real Estate, and South End Grocery. At the **Champion level** – Maine State Credit Union, Mercedes-Benz of Scarborough, Nebo Lodge Island Inn & Restaurant and The Landing, North Haven. And at the **Business level** – Page Gallery, Farnsworth Art Museum, Jess’s Market, Nina June, Plants Unlimited and Zoot Coffee. A list of all sponsors can be found at [www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand](http://www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand).

“Here at Allen Insurance and Financial, supporting initiatives like AIO’s Fill the Strand reflects our company’s deep commitment to community well-being,” said company president Michael Pierce. “By contributing our time and energy to this effort, now for the fifth year, we not only foster a strong sense of shared responsibility among our co-owners but also make a lasting impact that enriches lives far beyond the workplace. We are proud to be part of this project.”

“We’re thrilled to be hosting this terrific event for the 5th year! Fill the Strand accomplishes so much in one powerful day – moving forward AIO’s mission in such an impactful way,” shares the Strand’s Marketing Director, Jana Herbener. “At the Strand, we love to see so many community members coming through our doors with their donations and are so proud to be a part of it!”

For more information about the event and how you can participate please contact event coordinator Leila Murphy, [murphy.leila@gmail.com](mailto:murphy.leila@gmail.com).

***About AIO Food and Energy Assistance*** In our 35th year, AIO has provided nutritious food and heating assistance to Knox County families without judgement, always with compassion. Funding and access to AIO’s programs are more critical than ever as food

insecurity in Knox County is projected to continue to increase. Knox County currently has the 4th highest food insecurity rate in the state. Child food insecurity is estimated at 17.6%. During the past year, AIO has supported nearly 1,900 unique households in the County, that's more than 4,200 of our neighbors, or more than 10.2% of the County. AIO has distributed more than 75,000 meals to students through our weekend meals program. AIO's Energy Assistance Program helps households with heating assistance or electrical disconnection prevention – which is critical as winter begins. AIO has nearly doubled the number of energy assistance vouchers vs. last year in what has been a time of overwhelming need. AIO provides a direct path for donors to assist our community by putting your donation to work immediately.

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## **Death, Taxes and Change...What's in Store for 2025**



Sarah Ruef-  
Lindquist,  
JD, CTFA

By [Sarah Ruef-Lindquist](#) for Pen Bay Pilot

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: The only things that are sure in this life are death and taxes...we need to be mindful of change, at least as it pertains to taxes.

### Retirement Savings

A variety of plans can be used to save money on a tax-deferred basis. Those include 401(k)s, IRAs SEP and SIMPLE plans. The great thing about tax deferral is it allows accounts to not pay taxes on their dividends, income and capital gains for years and years, until funds are withdrawn, presumably in retirement. This tax deferral can allow for significantly higher levels of appreciation due to growth in market value without the negative impact of taxes on that growth.

It's important to maximize saving for retirement and take advantage of the provision of the tax law that allow taxpayers to save funds in tax-deferred accounts...for 2025, the contribution limit for most plans (401(k), 403(b) and 457 plans) increases from \$23,000 to \$23,500 with another \$7,500 for those age 50 – 59 or those older than 63. For those age 60, 61 or 62, the amount is now \$11,250. That means that certain taxpayers can add as much as \$34,750 to their plans in 2025, the highest amount ever allowed.

Similarly, in 2025 SIMPLE plans will have new elective deferral limits: \$16,500 up from \$16,000 and a catch-up amount of \$3,500 for those 50 – 59, and \$5,250 if there are 26 or more employees. For those with 25 or fewer employees, the catch-up amount is \$3,850 for those age 50-59 or older than 63, and \$5,250 for those 60, 61 or 62.

IRAs will continue to have a 2025 contribution limit of \$7,000 with an unchanged catch-up amount of \$1,000 for those age 50 and

older.

There are other changes for SEPs in store for 2025. For those who participate in them, taxpayers should consult their accountants and financial advisors for more details.

Why maximize savings in these types of plans and accounts? Earnings in these plans are tax free until withdrawn, which for many is not required until age 73 or if born in 1960 or later, age 75.

Please remember that financial and tax situations differ widely from person to person, and there is no one-size-fits-all for most of these situations. Consult with your financial and tax advisors for how any of these or other provisions that are changing in 2024 may affect you.