

It is always great to be a Buckeye, yet it is even more spectacular these days if you are a funeral director. The State of Ohio offers a Safety Intervention grant that is unique to Ohioans.

Other states may follow suit when they see the efficacy of this program. In an effort to curb workforce injuries and illnesses, this grant program offers a 3-to-1 matching grant. In other words, for every one dollar your business spends, The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) will spend THREE. This is for a maximum grant award of \$40,000 within a three year eligibility cycle with the state paying \$30,000 of that amount.

The process for acquiring the grant is user-friendly and stream-lined. The BWC will even send a safety field consultant to your funeral home to go over the specifics and help ensure the necessary components are in order. They also grant access to an ergonomist, or industrial hygienist. The goal is to make the process for getting new equipment an open dialogue without bureaucratic holdups. This grant is not retroactive, meaning it will not apply to equipment purchased at a prior date before applying for the grant.

One of the primary requirements is that the grant money cover equipment that will directly reduce workplace risk factors. This is the fundamental purpose of the Ultimate Lift 1000™ and The Stepper™, exclusively patented and manufactured by Mortuary Lift Company, located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa which has enabled many of their clients to take advantage of this financial windfall. Mortuary Lift Company has repeated the process with so many clients that they have even developed a "cheat sheet" to aid their clients in completing the paperwork.

Safety is a huge priority in every workplace. Arguably even more important in the funeral home environment because of the physical nature of dealing with body moving. The Ultimate Lift 1000 is a game-changer as there is no lifting necessary for the operator of the device. The number one injury in the funeral industry is back-related trauma.

The Mortuary Lift Company philosophy has always been, "work smarter, not harder," says Katie Hill, President of Mortuary Lift Company, "We get a birds-eye view of how our Lifts change the workplace dynamic and employee satisfaction. But we don't often see a scenario where the state is willing to majorly offset the expense of getting a Lift or a Stepper. This is a big victory for the funeral home owner who is getting the recognition and support they deserve for the frontline work they do."

The Stepper is a motorized stair-climbing extraction tool in the field. It is the perfect complement to The Ultimate 1000 Lift for body removal. Employees are often in a scenario where they need to lift heavy remains up and down stairs. The Stepper bears the weight, relieving the strain against the employees body and, in particular, the back. "Funeral homes all over the world pay full price for this equipment everyday. It is really inspiring to see the state of Ohio step up and pay seventy-five percent of the cost. It just

makes so much sense for the BWC to invest in the health and safety of Ohio's workforce," states Hill.

The Safety Intervention Grant (SIG) Program reopened and revamped the program in November 2022 with the goal of making it easier for businesses to apply. According to the website, they have:

- Reduced the requirement for being in business from two years to one year.
- Changed eligibility cycle to three years for all businesses.
- Limited reporting requirements to a one-year report/case study.
- Added the program to the new grant management portal for online application <https://info.bwc.ohio.gov/for-employers/safety-and-training/safety-grants/safety-intervention-grant>

The SIG Program is available to any Ohio private or public employer covered by the State Insurance Fund to purchase equipment to substantially reduce or eliminate injuries and illnesses associated with a particular task or operation and recommends taking the following steps prior to applying:

1. Consult the affected employees in the area of concern about your plans for implementing the equipment and solicit their feedback.
2. Contact vendor(s) to research item.
3. You may obtain pictures or drawings to help illustrate intervention(s).
4. Get a recent, detailed price quote(s) for the intervention(s) from the equipment vendor. The detailed price quote must be specifically for the employer applying for the grant funds and must list all items to be purchased. It's highly recommended to obtain a quote(s) of 120 days or longer.

This is a first come, first served initiative with a finite amount of money set aside. The funeral industry has yet to truly take advantage of this program. Mortuary Lift Company has experience and expertise with this program and would be a great resource while making inquiries. Please visit their website or give them a call.

Website www.MortuaryLift.com

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