

## Oklahoma Inter-Tribal Safety Council Is Formed to Provide Safety Resources

The Oklahoma Inter-Tribal Safety Council (OITSC) is a tribal safety group organized under the Oklahoma Safety Council, a non-profit and membership oriented organization with a mission of providing safety training and resources to all companies throughout Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Safety Council is a well known organization in Oklahoma that was first established in 1947. The Council is a chapter of the National Safety Council, an organization established in the 1910s and long known for its national advocacy of workplace, home and driver safety.

The OITSC was initially conceived as several of the Oklahoma tribes were already members of the Oklahoma Safety Council. Those relationships set into motion a few phone calls that evidenced there were many similarities of safety exposures between the tribes yet it appeared that most tribal safety people did not network with other Native American tribes. Safety representatives from two of the largest tribes, Chickasaw and Cherokee, were immediate advocates and asked the Oklahoma Safety Council to help organize an initial meeting to explore possibilities for inter-tribal sharing of safety ideas. Other tribes were contacted for similar interest and the OITSC was born.

The OITSC held its first meeting in October of 2010 at the offices of the Oklahoma Safety Council in Oklahoma City. Representatives of the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Muscogee Creek, and Kiowa tribes representing casinos, hotels, resorts and stores were in attendance. Since that time the Kaw, Choctaw, Citizen Potawatomi, Comanche and Eastern Shawnee have also joined. The group currently represents 20,000+ tribal employees. The OITSC's mission statement was established up front and is a simple yet powerful message:

*"To foster open communications on health, safety and environmental issues between and for the Native American Tribes of Oklahoma, and to provide educational resources that will protect the health and welfare of all tribal members."*

All Oklahoma tribes are welcome to join the OITSC. Meetings are facilitated by the Oklahoma Safety Council staff but the group belongs to the tribal members. Meetings are held bi-monthly and the group has initially decided to remain informal. This format was decided upon so that it would not appear that any large tribe might try to exert its influential size over others of smaller size. Dues have been set at \$100 per tribe per year no matter the size.



The greatest benefit of the OITSC group is that there is a large amount of sharing of ideas via simply getting together and openly discussing similar problems and solutions. Smaller tribes have much to gain from larger tribes' experiences and resources. The group also has had vendor services and product presentations with benefits to be gained, such as group discussion and a larger buying power to use to negotiate. A one-vote-per-tribe format is used to help decide on recommendations for issues and purchasing.

Primary objectives of the OITSC group are to provide better safety education for tribal employees and to hold leadership safety workshops that will reduce injuries and costs to the tribes. Additionally the group wants to provide resources to those beyond safety such as security, legal, gaming commission and human resources personnel. Longer term goals are to develop and extend home safety education and resources to all tribal members, not just those employed by the tribes.

The OITSC group will have a "kick-off" education event by holding a Safety and Health Conference scheduled for October 13, 2011 in Oklahoma City at the Crowne Plaza Hotel from 8 am – 4:30 pm. The one day conference will feature speakers covering topics on many of the health, safety, security and legal issues that affect many of the Native American businesses today. Speakers at the conference will be covering the following subjects: Overview of Tribal Laws and their status in Oklahoma / Update of Legislative Changes In State Law; Work Place Violence Recognition and Procedures; Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response; and a representative from the National Indian Gaming Commission will speak on environmental, safety and health policies. Thirty exhibitors are expected to be at the conference displaying and demonstrating the latest in safety and health services and products.

Native American tribes that are involved in the health and safety of tribal employees and guests are invited to attend along with employees involved in security/loss prevention and the gaming commission. A free hospitality suite is being set up for vendors and attendees staying at the hotel the night before the event. ♣

*For more information about how to register as an attendee or exhibitor at the conference, how to join the OITSC, or for general questions, the Oklahoma Safety Council can be reached by calling (405) 848-8626 or email [info@oksafety.org](mailto:info@oksafety.org).*