

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 53707-7946
Telephone: (608) 266-3131
Fax: (608) 266-1784
<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>
e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

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CONTACT: Dick Jones, Agency Liaison, 608-267-4780

Wisconsin Safety Council Honors Frances Huntley-Cooper

Worker's Compensation Division Administrator Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

WISCONSIN DELLS – Frances Huntley-Cooper, Administrator of the Division of Worker's Compensation, has been honored by the Wisconsin Safety Council with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

"No one is more deserving of this award than Frances," Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said upon learning of Huntley-Cooper's selection. "Wisconsin was the first state in the nation with a worker's compensation program nearly a century ago, and it remains a model to this day thanks to the excellent leadership of Frances Huntley-Cooper."

The Worker's Compensation program provides coverage for 120,000 employers and the 2.6 million workers they employ. Another 235 employers with about 300,000 employees are self insured, as allowed under the worker's compensation law. About \$900 million in benefits are paid by private insurance carriers or self-insured employers each year.

Under Huntley-Cooper's leadership, the division has strengthened safety initiatives to avoid injuries in the workplace. Each year, the division investigates about 200 accidents that may result in safety violations. On major projects such as the Marquette Interchange, the division provides for comprehensive coverage that helps reduce premiums and maintains the focus on safety.

Last August, Governor Doyle announced a 2.47 percent decrease in the overall rate, the second rate reduction since 2003. Wisconsin's rates are among the lowest in the country, and nearly 94% of Wisconsin's estimated workforce is covered by a worker's compensation policy.

"Our declining worker's compensation rate reflects a greater emphasis by employers on safety and risk management, resulting in fewer claims, lower costs for employers and a safer healthier workforce," Secretary Gassman said. "The declining rate also reflects the excellent leadership of Frances Huntley-Cooper."

Huntley-Cooper was presented the award at the Wisconsin Corporate Safety Awards banquet Tuesday evening in Wisconsin Dells.

Huntley-Cooper was appointed WCD Administrator in February of 2003 by Secretary Gassman. In 1991, Huntley-Cooper was elected Mayor of Fitchburg and made history by becoming the first African American to be elected mayor of a Wisconsin city.