I Think, Therefore I Am

During the Age of Enlightenment, French philosopher, mathematician and scientist Rene Descartes came to this astounding conclusion, “Cogito ergo sum” or “I think, therefore I am.” While you are pondering that, particularly in this day of AI, a similar principle applies to ourselves and our employees relative to workplace safety. An organization in which employee safety is an integral part of the work process and culture will encourage staff to be constantly thinking about their personal and their co-workers’ safety. If this type of self-awareness is not part of your community’s culture, you should strive to make it part of everything you do as you serve your residents.

Not only does this type of awareness make good sense from a health and safety standpoint, as well as being an important risk management tool, it is also a regulatory duty to at least attempt to have your staff thinking and working safely. WAC 296-800-130 Safety committees/safety meetings sets forth the regulations associated with the obligation of most employers to maintain a regular safety committee and, in the cases of smaller employers, safety meetings. It is our recommendation that regardless of how the safety committee is constituted and how frequently it meets, management should hold regular safety meetings with staff. These meetings should allow all staff to provide input on safety related issues and areas that need management focus. The meetings also allow management to discuss safety-related training topics with the goal of creating and maintaining a culture where workplace safety is deeply engrained in each staff member.

To return to Descartes’ statement, “I think, therefore I am,” your employees should say “I think, therefore I’m safe.” (Sorry, I couldn’t resist.) Your staff needs to be self-aware and focused on following work processes that avoid injury. If you can inculcate that type of corporate culture, more employees will go home safe and sound at the end of the day and your community will reap the ancillary benefit of improved retro performance.