Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Tool Kit

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS SERVICES

Risk Management Services

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Introduction

Safety policies, safety training and personal protective equipment are all vital tools for ensuring safety in the workplace. However, without safety communication their usefulness tends to fall by the wayside. This tool kit was developed to provide a series of timely, informative and useful topics that cover a wide range of safety issues. It will help you develop or improve upon the safety awareness of your employees by increasing their understanding of safety concepts, practices and policies. The results will include reduced worker's compensation claims, improved efficiency and better employee relations.

This Tool Kit was designed for business managers, risk managers, all members of a safety committee, safety trainers, communication departments and anyone responsible for assisting in the development of a safe culture for their organization. It provides a variety of avenues and topics to explore in order to increase its safety and risk management awareness.

When properly presented, safety topics have a positive effect on the attendees. They will leave the presentation knowing that:

- All injuries and occupational illnesses are preventable.
- Each employee has the responsibility to work safely.
- Awareness, observation, communication and timely reporting are keys to a safe environment.

Safety is a daily activity and we want to provide topics that can be shared throughout the year. The Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Tool Kit is a way to accomplish this goal.

Objectives

The objective of the Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Tool Kit is to emphasize the value of safety communication and to assist management with the success of their safety program. The responsibility of improving safety and health belongs to every member of the organization. When employees do not understand the importance of following safety policies, accidents happen. Safety communication and awareness enhance your safety program. This tool kit will help you to:

- Reinforce your organization's goal to create a safe work environment.
- Encourage and empower your employees to participate in your safety program.
- Improve overall safety awareness.
- Provide an ongoing reminder of safety practices and policies.
- Provide attendees with methods to improve safety communications throughout the organization at all levels.
- Provide tools and resources to begin the process.
- Openly communicate with every employee to insure a clear understanding and the importance of safety.

4 Why Communication is Important

Most workplace accidents are the result of poor communication. Perhaps an employee was not aware of a change in a particular policy or procedure or they did not fully understand the change because of the way it was communicated and the result is an accident. Merely telling someone to "be safe" will have little or no effect on his or her workday. However, using proper safety communication techniques can improve overall awareness and understanding that in turn can prevent injuries. Here are a few benefits of effective communication:

- Reinforces the organizations goal to create a safe work environment.
- Establishes a way to encourage/empower employees to participate.
- Improves awareness of safety in the workplace.
- Provides a continuous reminder of safe practices.

Understanding the basic principles of communication is also important. An effective communicator will always:

- Focus on the situation, issue or behavior - not on the person.
- Maintain the self-confidence and self-esteem of others.
- Maintain constructive relationships with employees, peers, and managers.
- Take the initiative to make things better.
- Lead by example.

Failure to communicate safety information effectively can have negative consequences, such as:

- Increase in accidents, injuries, and illness.
- Lost workdays.
- Reduced productivity and delays.
- Risk-taking or short cuts taken by employees.
- Reduced employee morale.

Where to Start

Leadership must be committed to the process. Communicating policies and procedures must have the full support of management or employees will ignore the message. You want to avoid the "if management doesn't care then why should I care" attitude.

Determine who will be responsible for overseeing the processes and assigning responsibility:

- Director of HR
- Safety/Risk Management Committee
- Director of Ministry
- Director of Facilities
- Managers/Supervisor

5 A Guide to Presenting Your Topic

Preparation is key to the success of any safety training presentation. The attendees must believe the presenter is knowledgeable of the topic and enthusiastic. This can be accomplished by the following methods:

- Plan a goal you hope to achieve and then prepare your presentation with an emphasis on that goal.
- Make certain to understand the importance of your topic.
- Prepare loss statistics to emphasize the purpose of the chosen topic.
- Encourage employees to participate. For example, ask the participants to share personal experiences associated with the topic.
- Encourage attendees to ask questions. If you do not know the answer – let the person know you will get back to them immediately.
- Utilize two-way communication: keep it positive and interactive. Develop an "active listening" behavior. If you communicate a safety message without taking the time to listen carefully to the response of employees, the communication is incomplete. Remember, you have to speak *and listen* for communication to be successful.

In addition to having knowledge of the topic, your presentation *style* is vital to keeping the attention of your attendees. If they are bored or "tuned out" your message will not get through.

- Keep your communications simple. One safety message at a time, simply and directly stated, is more likely to be heard and understood. If too much information is being communicated all at once, it can be hard for employees to absorb all those different messages at one time.
- Be as precise as possible. Use concrete language and examples to explain what you mean so that you leave no room for misinterpretation.
- Be concise. Say only what needs to be said in order to get your point across without adding extra words.
- Make certain that your expectations are clearly defined. It is important to know and express what you expect to happen as a result of your communication or presentation.
- Repeat your message as needed. A safety message often needs to be repeated on several different occasions to get through to employees.
- Use various props whenever appropriate. Employees tend to understand the concept being presented when it is demonstrated to them.

6 Various Methods Organizations Use to Communicate Safety

Gathering employees in a room and presenting a topic is not the only way to communicate. At the completion of the meeting, you need to continue reinforcing the topic of your safety presentation. In addition to safety training and safety committee meetings, the following methods are perfect ways to get your message to your employees and to keep previously discussed safety information fresh:

- Conduct a short safety meeting with your employees.
- Attach the safety bulletin to internet blasts with a brief note of support from top management.
- Provide a copy of the bulletin to your safety committee and ask for the topic to be included in their next agenda.
- Post Tool Kit topics, etc. on a bulletin board where many people gather such as a lunchroom.
- Internal e-blasts to all employees.
- Weekly, quarterly, semiannual and annual employee newsletters are a great way to get all types of messages to your employees.
- Post safety messages such as the safety policy from upper management.
- Utilize safety posters throughout your facility and refresh them frequently throughout the year.
- Making a Safety Committee's activities visual to employees and let them know who to report concerns. In addition, post minutes from the committee meetings.

Deciding on a Topic

Deciding on a safety topic can be a difficult task. The Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Tool Kit can help/assist by offering timely topics. For instance:

- Have you noticed an increase in certain claims? For instance, are exertion claims rising? Perhaps our "Proper Stretching" or "Ergonomics – Micro Break Stretches" topics along with our variety of back safety topics can help increase employee's awareness of the exertion hazards they encounter on a daily basis.
- Are there seasonal hazards that need to be addressed? Are slip trip and fall injuries increasing during the winter months? The "STF Prevention" safety bulletin will help remind your employees to take extra precautions during this season.
- Injuries can occur in the office environment as well. Presentations such as "Computer Work and Injuries" or "Office Workstation Ergonomics" are two topics that help office workers with processes that can provide a physically stress-free environment.

Included in the appendix of this toolkit are informational bulletins and topics that can be referenced and used to develop your own Safety Chat or however you decide to communicate the safety information.

7 Using the Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Template

When you conduct a Safety Communication meeting, use the attached template once you have decided on either a topic using a bulletin in this toolkit or another topic that effects your workplace. This is a great way to organize your meeting, get you prepared and help you stay on target once the meeting begins.

Start with an objective:

- What is the outcome of the meeting you want the employees to have?
- Why is this important?

Target Time:

- Keep the meeting short - average time 5 – 10 minutes.
- Conduct the meeting during a slow period in the day.

Preparation:

- Gather all supplies, tools for meeting.
- Practice.

Meeting:

- Welcome everybody to the meeting.
- Review the topic.
- State the objectives of the meeting.
- Provide loss statistics to emphasize the importance of the topic.
- Ask questions and get comments: Listen actively: Pay attention, repeat the question or comment, ask for clarification, get ideas for improvement from employees, take the ideas seriously, make the change or inform the employee the idea will be researched. Make sure after the research is done to inform the employees if the suggestion is feasible or not.
- Remind the attendees about the incident reporting process.

Conclusion:

- Provide a summary of the objectives and the planned outcome.
- Thank everyone for attending and always close with:

"Safety is everyone's responsibility and through teamwork, we will create a safe environment for all!"

Monthly Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Meeting

_____

(Topic Title)

Objective:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Target Time for Communication: _____

Target Audience:

_____

_____

_____

Prep prior to the Communication:

_____

_____

_____

Communication Meeting:

- Welcome everybody to the meeting
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- Remind participants of the incident reporting process

Conclusion:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- Thank everyone for attending and always close with:

"Safety is everyone's responsibility and through teamwork, we will create a safe environment for all!"

Monthly Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Meeting
The Buzz on Bug Bites

Objective:
When spring arrives, many organizations begin the task of outdoor clean up and landscaping. This means storage sheds closed during the winter are now reopened, garages are cleaned out and equipment is uncovered for the upcoming summer. It is during this time when the bug bites begin. The purpose of this training is to remind everyone to beware of the dark corners and protect yourself against the biting bugs.

Target time for communication: 5 minutes

Target Audience:
- The maintenance and landscaping staff.
- Any staff member who helps clean out storage spaces.
- Individuals who work in the garden.
- Camp councilors.

Prep Prior to the Communication:
- Review the bulletin and make enough handouts for participants.
- Know what the most common types of bugs are in your area. Have pictures of them.
- Know what PPE is issued and used to minimize this risk.
- Have incident reporting forms available.
- Find a quiet place to meet with the group.

Communication Meeting:
- Welcome everybody to the meeting.
- Ask Questions like:
  What kind of bugs have you seen around here?
  What do you do if you see them?
  Who has been bitten by a bug while at work?
- Share the bulletin about bug bites and discuss how to handle an encounter with any of them.
- Ask for their thoughts and ideas about the bulletin (if you ask for ideas be prepared to research and possibly implement a new process for dealing with them. A good leader will use these sessions to involve employees on safety improvement plans).
- Remind participants about proper PPE for working around bugs.
  Proper clothing: long pants, socks and long sleeved shirts.
  Work gloves.
  Boots if working in tall grass, wooded area.
- Remind participants of the reporting process for incidents. Emphasize the fact that all incidents must be reported immediately.

Conclusion:
- Summarize the bulletin information and pass out copies (if copies will not be provided, post the bulletin in areas where other organizational postings are placed).
- Thank everyone for attending and always close with:

"Safety is everyone's responsibility and through teamwork, we will create a safe environment for all!"

Monthly Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Meeting
Ladder Safety

Objective:
Prevent incidents and injuries when using ladders. This safety chat will address general safety issues pertaining to the use of ladders.

Target time for communication: 5 – 10 minutes

Target Audience:
Employees at Risk - those that use ladders. Departments include (member customizes based on ministry and risk).

Prep Prior to the Communication:
- Ladder types and sizes in use.
- Existing ladder safety rules and/or policies.
- Past ladder incident / injury statistics.

Communication Meeting:
- Welcome everybody to the meeting
- Stepladder Accident / Injury Statistics
  - *On an annual basis, falls from ladders result in approximately 24,882 injuries, 36 fatalities and 11,570 lost workday injuries. In a ladder accident, you don't have to fall far to get hurt. Workers injured in falls are usually less than 10 feet above the ladder's base of support. Most ladder injuries associated with falls include slips, loss of footing or unstable ladders.*
- Practicing Safe Ladder Use
  - *Must have smooth surfaces in good condition.*
  - *Must be able to support at least four times their maximum intended load, the worker with tools, and materials.*
  - *Ladder rungs must be parallel, level and equally spaced between 8 and 12 inches apart and be made to limit slipping.*
  - *A metal spreader must hold the front and back sections of a stepladder in an open position when being used.*
  - *Place a straight ladder at a 75^0 angle or a 4:1 ratio when setting up.*
  - *Select the proper ladder for the job and never use a metal ladder for electrical work or work near power lines.*
  - *Never stand on the top two rungs of the ladder or reach beyond your waist while on the ladder.*
  - *Extend and secure a straight ladder 3 feet above the ledge or roof.*
  - *Always ensure the ladder is placed on a firm, flat surface and that the safety feet are in place.*
  - *Inspect the ladder before use and never use a defective ladder.*
  - *Clean mud and grease from the ladder rungs and your shoes before climbing the ladder.*
  - *Hold the ladder with two hands and use a tool belt or other approved method to carry tools.*
  - *Maintain 3 points of contact when climbing.*

Monthly Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Meeting

Ladder Safety *(continued)*

- Ladder Inspections - Ladders should be inspected prior to use and a schedule should be developed to document regular, formal inspections. It is also important to establish a system for documenting problems and removing ladders from service. For example, tagging defective ladders and labeling them as "Out of Service." When inspecting the ladder, look for the following hazards:
  - ***Rungs:*** *Bent, twisted, broken joints, or missing rungs.*
  - ***Rung Wear Sleeves:*** *Missing, worn-out, or loose.*
  - ***End Caps:*** *Missing, broken, or loose rivets.*
  - ***Rail Enclosures:*** *Missing, broken or loose rivets.*
  - ***Rails:*** *Cracks, splits, or breaks.*
  - ***Shoes/Spurs:*** *Missing, broken brackets, or missing/torn rubber pads.*
  - ***Locks:*** *Missing, broken, or open throats.*
  - ***Lock Springs:*** *Worn or broken.*
  - ***Lock Flippers:*** *Broken springs or broken flippers.*
  - ***Rope:*** *Missing, worn, or substandard.*
  - ***Pulley:*** *Worn out or loose rivets.*
- Care and Storage
  - *Store ladders in a dry place—avoid exposure to heat or moisture or sunlight.*
  - *Rest ladders on support racks.*
  - *Avoid stacking on top of each other.*
  - *Clean off any grease, mud or oil prior to use.*
  - *Never paint a ladder.*
  - *When transported in vehicles, secure ladders in place.*
- Additional information and regulatory compliance directives are available at https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.1053

Conclusion:

- Ask if there are any questions?
- Thank everyone for attending and always close with:

"Safety is everyone's responsibility and through teamwork, we will create a safe environment for all!"

12 Conclusion

Safety is a daily activity and we want to provide topics that can be shared throughout the year. Using The Safety Communication and Awareness 365 Tool Kit will help you effectively communicate your safety message while allowing you to interact with employees. It provides a way to speak about safety and to listen to their thoughts, concerns and suggestions as well. Finally, effective communication will help improve workplace safety and prevent accidents and illness.

The following resources are ideal safety communication guides to reference :
https://www.cbservices.org/images/property-casualty/security-prep-toolkit.pdf
https://www.cbservices.org/images/property-casualty/slip-trip-fall-toolkit.pdf
https://www.cbservices.org/images/property-casualty/202006-rms-guide.pdf

"Safety is everyone's responsibility and through teamwork, we will create a safe environment for all!"

13 Appendix Safety Sheets

Practicing Safe Ladder Use
Ladder Inspection Care Storage
Ladder Safety Tips
Emergency Evacuation
Planning for the Unexpected – Inclement Weather
Tornado Preparedness Review
Weather Hazards – Tornado Safety
Lightning Safety
Outdoor Hazards and Safety Tips
Poison Ivy Oak and Sumac
The Buzz on Bug Bites
Preventing Heat-Related Illness
Preventing Driver Fatigue
Defensive Driving
Distracted Driving – A Common Cause of Accidents
Driving Safety – Fatigue & Motor Vehicle Accidents
Cellphones – Tools or Deathtraps
Visitor Management
Safety Through Teamwork
Seven Strategies to Improve Safety Communication and Build Teamwork
Hazard Recognition & Control
Workplace Safety – Keep Your Exits Clear
Practicing Good housekeeping
Personal Protective Equipment
Personal Safety Responsibility
Safe Work Habits Pay Off
The Benefits of Stretching
Proper Stretching
Ergonomics – Micro Break Stretches
Ergonomic Workstation Checklist
Office Workstation Ergonomics FAQs
Computer Work and Injuries
Office Workstation Ergonomics
Back Safety and Health Awareness
Back Injury Indicators
Back Injury Prevention – Watch Your Back at Work
Proper Lifting Techniques
Ten Tips to Avoid Lower Back Pain
12 Steps to Minimize Material Handling Weight
Eight Steps to Safe Sidewalks
STF Prevention
Safety Awareness – STF Exposures
Food Service Safety – Fall Hazards
Food Service Food Handling Tips
Food Service Safety Recipes
Classroom Storage – Schools

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Practicing Safe Ladder Use

On an annual basis, falls from ladders result in approximately 24,882 injuries, 36 fatalities and 11,570 lost workday injuries. In a ladder accident, you don't have to fall far to get hurt. Workers injured in falls are usually less than 10 feet above the ladder's base of support.

Most ladder injuries associated with falls include slips, loss of footing or unstable ladders. Keep in mind the following when using ladders.

- Ladders must have surfaces that will not cut workers or snag their clothing.
- Ladders must be able to support at least four times their maximum intended load, the worker with tools, and materials.
- Ladder rungs must be parallel, level and equally spaced between 8 and 12 inches apart and be made to limit slipping.
- A metal spreader must hold the front and back sections of a stepladder in an open position when being used.
- When the climbing height requires two or more ladder lengths to be used, there must be a landing between each ladder and the ladders cannot directly line up. Use conventional fall protection at the landings.
- Place a straight ladder at a 75^{o} angle or a 4:1 ratio.
- Select the proper ladder for the job and never use a metal ladder for electrical work or work near power lines.
- Never stand on the top two rungs of the ladder or reach beyond your belt buckle while on the ladder.
- Extend and secure a straight ladder 3 feet above the ledge or roof.
- Always ensure the ladder is placed on a firm, flat surfce and that the safety feet are in place.
- Inspect the ladder before use and never use a defective ladder.
- Clean mud and grease from the ladder rungs and your shoes before climbing the ladder.
- Hold the ladder with two hands and use a tool belt or other approved method to carry tools.

Ladder Inspections

Ladders should be inspected prior to use and a schedule should be developed to document regular, formal inspections. It is also important to establish a system for documenting problems and removing ladders from service. For example, tagging defective ladders and labeling them as "Out of Service."

When inspecting the ladder, look for the following hazards:

- **Rungs:** Bent, twisted, broken joints, or missing rungs.
- **Rung Wear Sleeves:** Missing, worn-out, or loose
- **End Caps:** Missing, broken, or loose rivets
- **Rail Enclosures:** Missing, broken or loose rivets
- **Rails:** Cracks, splits, or breaks
- **Shoes/Spurs:** Missing, broken brackets, or missing/torn rubber pads
- **Locks:** Missing, broken, or open throats
- **Lock Springs:** Worn or broken
- **Lock Flippers:** Broken springs or broken flippers
- **Rope:** Missing, worn, or substandard
- **Pulley:** Worn out or loose rivets
- **Guide Brackets:** Bent, loose, or broken

Care and Storage

- Store ladders in a dry place—avoid exposure to heat or moisture.
- Rest ladders on support racks.
- Clean off any grease, mud or oil prior to use.
- Never paint a ladder.
- When transported in vehicles, secure ladders in place.

Additional information and regulatory compliance directives are available at www.osha.gov: https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.1053

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Ladder Inspections, Care and Storage

INSPECTIONS

- Assign responsibility for ladder inspections.
- Inspect ladders prior to use and establish a schedule for regular, formal inspections.
- Look for broken or missing side rails, steps or rungs.
- Note loose or damaged hardware or joints between steps and the side rail.
- Check rungs to be sure they are not covered with grease, oil, mud, or other slippery surfaces.
- Be sure the safety feet are intact and not missing.
- Look for fabricated parts or field repairs.
- On metal ladders, note any dents, rust, or corrosion.
- For wooden ladders, note paint or soft areas.
- Establish a system to document problems and remove ladders from service—such as tagging defective ladders and labeling them as "Out of Service."

CARE AND STORAGE

- Store ladders in a dry place—avoid exposure to heat or moisture.
- Rest ladders on support racks.
- Clean off any grease, mud or oil prior to use.
- Never paint a ladder.
- When transported in vehicles, secure ladders in place.

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Ladder Safety Tips

Always face the ladder.	Place a straight ladder at a 75° angle or a 4:1 ratio.	Hold the ladder with 2 hands and use a tool belt or other approved method to carry tools.
Select the proper ladder for the job, avoid using a metal ladder for electric work.	Clean mud and grease from your shoes and the ladder rungs.	Never stand on the top 2 rungs of the ladder or allow your belt buckle to go past the side rails.
Inspect the ladder before use and never use a defective ladder.	Extend and secure a straight ladder 3 feet above the ledge or roof.	Always ensure the ladder is placed on a firm, flat surface and that safety feet are in place.

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Emergency Evacuation

What Every Employee Should Know

1. Know and follow your facility's policies and procedures for emergencies and evacuations.
2. Remain calm.
3. Be aware of evacuation routes, exits, and assembly and shelter areas.
4. When trained and able, activate alarm systems, administer first aid/CPR or operate a fire extinguisher.
5. Contact officials and others in the immediate area.
6. Do not use elevators to evacuate.
7. Cooperate in evacuation drills and employee training sessions.
8. Remain in the designated area until authorities give the all-clear signal.

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Planning for the Unexpected–Inclement Weather and Sudden Dangers

By Chris Neal, M.A.

In a perfect world, driving would be like TV commercials—a stress-free, uneventful episode of pure moving pleasure; in short, your morning or evening commute would be the highlight of your day.

Unfortunately, life is hardly a TV commercial and driving remains an experience that taxes the concentration and patience of the most skilled of drivers. When you couple the typical driving experience with bad weather and sudden dangers, you have the potential for a threat to the safety of you and your family.

Driving in Inclement Weather
In the United States in a recent year, more than 5,000 people were killed and another HALF MILLION injured in automobile crashes attributed to inclement weather. Knowing some basic safety tips for driving in these conditions could one day help save your life:

- If possible, stay home and avoid driving. If you must go out, be extremely careful and drive appropriately for the conditions.
- Slow down. This cannot be stressed enough. Posted speed limits are for "ideal" weather and maximum visibility. It can take twice the usual distance to stop your vehicle on even slightly wet pavement.
- Turn on headlights to see and be seen.
- Leave plenty of extra space between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- When you leave, tell people which route you are taking and when you plan to arrive.
- Do not be overly confident with four-wheel drive. Four-wheel drive does not mean you can stop or turn more quickly.
- In heavy rain, stay as much as possible in the center lane of a multi-lane highway because water tends to pool in the outside lanes or in a lane next to a restraining wall.
- Do not drive through standing water, especially if you do not know, with absolute certainty, how deep it is.
- Avoid swerving and abrupt braking.
- Check your mirrors more frequently and set them to minimize blind spots. Rain on your outside mirrors and rear window can distort your view or make things harder to see.
- To help avoid hydroplaning, slow down in wet weather. Be sure your tires have plenty of tread, proper inflation and consider getting "all-weather" tires that are specially designed for bad conditions.
- If you begin to hydroplane:
  - ⇒ Do not panic.
  - ⇒ Keep both hands on the steering wheel.
  - ⇒ Ease your foot off the accelerator.
  - ⇒ Do not slam on the brakes.
  - ⇒ Without anti-lock brakes (ABS), if wheels lock-up and you begin to skid, simply release the brake pedal and then gently re-apply pressure. Steer gently in the direction you want the car to go. Check your owner's manual to see if you have ABS brakes.
- If your car is not equipped with anti-lock brakes and you begin to skid while braking:
  - ⇒ Release the brake pedal, and then gently re-apply pressure. In a car equipped with anti-lock brakes, press the pedal firmly and hold it.
  - ⇒ Gently steer in the direction you want the car to go; do not jerk the wheel.
  - ⇒ Be prepared to correct more than once as your car straightens out, but be extremely careful not to overcorrect. Overcorrecting can lead to a rollover accident and overcorrection is often the cause of fatal head-on collisions.
- Always take flood warnings seriously. Do not drive through standing water and never drive through rushing water.
- If your vehicle stalls in high water, abandon it and immediately seek higher ground. Six inches of rapidly moving floodwater can sweep you off your feet, and only two feet of water—approximately mid-thigh deep on an average person—can sweep away the average car or light truck.
- If you are in your car during a lightning storm, DO NOT attempt to leave the vehicle to run for cover. The car's metal cage will conduct a charge into the ground and protect you.
- If you get caught in heavy fog, the best thing to do is to stop well off the road until visibility is better. If there is no safe place to stop:
  - ⇒ Slow down. Fog makes it very difficult to judge your speed and the speed of others.
  - ⇒ Turn on wipers, defroster, and low-beam headlights (high beams can actually decrease your visibility).
  - ⇒ Moisture from fog can make roads slick, so brake smoothly.
  - ⇒ Lower your car window slightly and turn off the radio. Watch for slower moving cars and listen for engine sounds or car horns—a sign that someone may be nearby, even if you can't see them.

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- ⇒ If the fog is too dense to continue, pull completely off the road and try to position your vehicle in an area that's protected from other traffic. Turn on your emergency flashers.
- ⇒ Consider installing "fog lights" if you often drive in fog.

Sudden Dangers
Driving for most of us can be described as 99 percent drudgery punctuated with occasional incidents of sheer terror. We have all been guilty of driving inattentively with our minds on our next appointment or other obligations, or just missing an accident because of our inattentiveness. The leading cause of death among Americans below the age of 38 is motor vehicle crashes, and 75 percent of the time, the factors contributing to these accidents are driver-related. Being cognizant of certain hazards that suddenly face us as drivers is critical to coming home safely.

Red lights—Never assume a green light means all is okay. If your light is green, make sure other drivers, at or near the intersection, are not trying to beat the yellow or red. If you are at an intersection without a light, look left, right, and left again before moving out.

Blowouts—If a front tire blows, the car will pull hard to the side of the blowout and the steering wheel will vibrate forcefully. If a rear tire blows, the back of the car will weave back and forth and vibrate. Grip the steering wheel tightly with both of your hands—at the 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock positions. Do not slam on the brakes or you could lose control completely. Instead, take your foot off the gas and concentrate on staying in your lane, then slow down gradually and pull completely off the road to a safe location.

Skids—Do not hit the brakes hard when your car starts to skid. Instead, take your foot off the accelerator and turn your steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the car to go until you regain traction. If you have anti-lock brakes, step on the brake petal firmly and turn your steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the car to go until you regain traction. In all cases, do not panic but instead concentrate and have faith in your ability to regain control.

Deep water—While this does not happen often, it happens enough that you should know what to do if your car leaves the road and enters deep water. Above all, do not panic. If you panic, you will almost certainly perish. Instead, focus on the task at hand, beginning with **POGO**:

P—Pop your safety belt immediately, but do not release it before you go into the water. The safety belt will help protect you during the car's impact with the water.

O—Open the window and get out quickly because power windows can short-circuit in the water. If you cannot get out through the window, try the door. At first, the water pressure will probably hold it closed, but as the water rises, it will equalize the pressure and it should open.

GO—Get Out! Get a deep breath of air, relax, and float to the surface. If you are in moving water, find the nearest secured object and wait for rescue. If rescue is not near and weather conditions will not allow you to wait—such as cold water, which could lead to hypothermia—you should attempt to make it to the shore.

Brake Failure—Do not panic, but instead think and act quickly. Remember this simple sequence and maneuver your vehicle as quickly and steadily as you can while keeping your eyes on the road:

1. Pump the brake pedal and sometimes the pressure will return unless you have an ABS brake system in which you should never pump the brakes. With ABS, pumping could interrupt the operation of the brakes and actually increase your stopping distance.

2. Set the parking brake slowly, while keeping the release mechanism activated. Do not set the parking brake quickly because it could cause your vehicle to spin. And, keep the release mechanism activated so the parking brake doesn't lock on you.

3. Shift into a lower gear—or lower range on automatic transmissions. The drag on the engine will help slow you down.

4. Guide your vehicle onto the shoulder of the road or to some other safe location as soon as possible.

Blind spots—Practically all cars have "blind spots" of some sort—spots where it is difficult to see cars that are close behind you or to your right or left. To tell if you are driving in someone's blind spot, just glance at the other driver's rearview mirror. If you cannot see the other driver's face, assume that he or she cannot see you. Move forward or fall back so the other driver can see you. To overcome blind spots in your own vehicle, quickly turn to visually check for other vehicles traveling in lanes next to yours before you pull over or change lanes.

Stuck accelerator—This rarely occurs, but when it does it poses a major danger. First, try pulling the accelerator pedal upwards with the toe of your shoe. If a passenger is with you, have him or her reach down and pull up on the accelerator pedal. Do not take your eyes off the road to reach down to do this by yourself. If your car has a manual transmission, press down on the clutch. The engine will continue to race, but you can then pull safely off the road. If it's an automatic transmission, put it in neutral. However, do not turn off the key since vehicles will lose power steering and in most cases lock the steering wheel.

The hood flies up—This is another rare occurrence, but equally dangerous. Slow down smoothly, but—to avoid being rear ended—do not slam on your brakes. Try seeing ahead by peeking through the opening between the dashboard and the hood. If not, then lean out the window to see what is ahead of you. Pull off the road.

Another car approaching the wrong way in my lane—Try to escape to the right if possible, and almost anything is better than a head-on collision. Do not move to the left, as the oncoming driver might correct at the last minute and turn back in the direction you've just gone. While you are moving to the right, blow your horn, and if you cannot avoid a collision, brake firmly and steadily because every mile per hour you slow down will reduce the magnitude of the impact.

For more information:

- To find out what the weather will be like during your trip, visit: www.weather.com.
- For a listing of road conditions in each state, visit: http://members.tripod.com/buckybeaver.
- A great resource for driver safety issues and articles is available at: https://www.nsc.org/road-safety

-Reprinted from www.gbriskcontrol.com/Library/Workplace Resource/Articles/673-Planning for the Unexpected: Inclement Weather and Sudden Dangers.

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Tornado Preparedness Review

No matter the season, the potential for severe thunderstorms with the capability of producing tornadoes is always a possibility.

Understanding Watches and Warnings

Tornado Watch:
Tornadoes may be possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

Tornado Warning:
A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area, move to your pre-designated place of safety.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch:
Conditions in your area are favorable for producing severe thunderstorms.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning:
Severe thunderstorm activity has been confirmed and is moving toward your area.

"Keep An Eye to the Sky"

Typical conditions in which a tornado could occur result from a dark, often greenish sky, the presence of a wall cloud or large, falling hail. If a tornado is approaching, you will hear a loud roar, similar to the sound of a freight train.

Take Cover

When warnings are issued or if threatening weather approaches, take the following action:

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement. If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture. Stay away from windows.
- When in a vehicle, do not try to outrun the tornado in your car. Leave the vehicle immediately and lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression.
- If you are outside and there is no shelter available, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression.
- Abandon mobile homes. Even if they are tied down, they offer little protection from tornadoes.

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Tornado Safety

Weather Warnings

TORNADO WATCH: Tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

TORNADO WARNING: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area and the sky becomes threatening, move to your pre-designated place of safety.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH: Severe thunderstorms are possible in your area.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING: Severe thunderstorms are occurring.

LOOK FOR:

- Dark, often greenish sky
- Wall Cloud
- Large Hail
- Loud Roar, similar to a freight train

IF A WARNING IS ISSUED OR IF THREATENING WEATHER APPROACHES:

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.
- Stay away from windows.
- Get out of automobiles.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car, instead, leave it immediately.
- If caught outside or in a vehicle, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes and should be abandoned.

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Lightning Safety

Lightning strikes can severely injure or kill workers whose jobs involve working outdoors. Annually in the United States, cloud-to-ground lightning occurs 20 to 25 million times and over 300 people are struck by lightning.

During the past 30 years, about 50 people on average have been killed by lightning strikes every year and many more suffer permanent disabilities. Precautions should be taken to prevent worker exposure to lightning. Employers should recognize lightning as an occupational hazard. Supervisors and workers at outdoor worksites should take lightning safety seriously.

AFFECTED WORKERS

Workers whose jobs involve working outdoors in open spaces, on or near tall objects, or near explosives or conductive materials (e.g. metal) have significant exposure to lightning risks. Worker activities at higher risk for lightning hazards include:

- Logging
- Explosives handling or storage
- Heavy equipment operation
- Roofing
- Construction (e.g., scaffolding)
- Building maintenance
- Power utility field repair
- Steel erection/telecommunications
- Farming and field labor
- Plumbing and pipe fitting
- Lawn services/landscaping
- Airport ground personnel operations
- Pool and beach lifeguarding

REDUCING LIGHTNING HAZARDS WHEN WORKING OUTDOORS

Employers, supervisors, and workers should understand lightning risks, characteristics, and precautions to minimize workplace hazards. Lightning is unpredictable and can strike outside the heaviest rainfall areas or even up to 10 miles from any rainfall.

Many lightning victims are caught outside during a storm because they did not act promptly to get to a safe place, **or they go back outside too soon after a storm has passed.** If signs of approaching thunderstorms occur, workers should not begin any task they cannot quickly stop. Proper planning and safe practices can easily increase lightning safety when working outdoors.

OSHA and NOAA recommend that employers and supervisors follow these lightning safety best practices for workers whose jobs involve working outdoors:

Check NOAA Weather Reports: Prior to beginning any outdoor work, employers and supervisors should check NOAA weather reports (weather.gov) and radio forecasts for all weather hazards. OSHA recommends that employers consider rescheduling jobs to avoid workers being caught outside in hazardous weather conditions. When working outdoors, supervisors and workers should continuously monitor weather conditions. Watch for darkening clouds and increasing wind speeds, which can indicate developing thunderstorms. Pay

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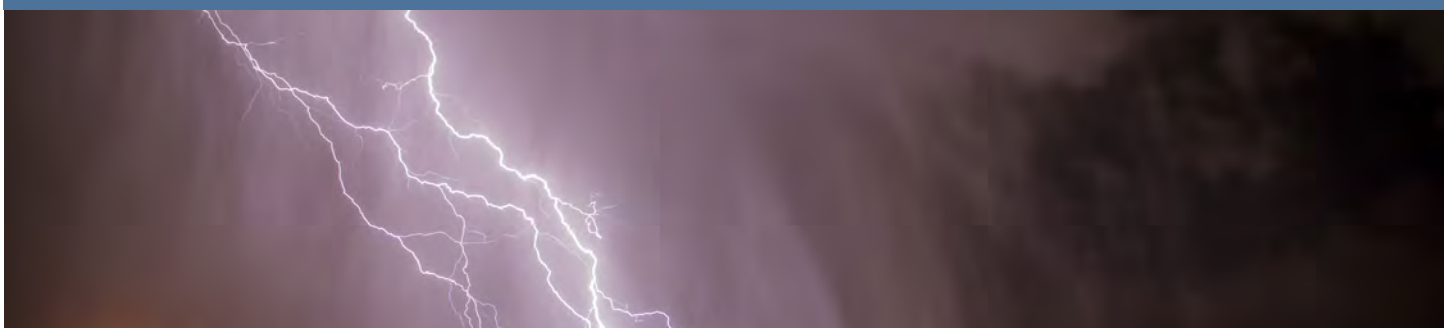

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close attention to local television, radio, and Internet weather reports, forecasts, and emergency notifications regarding thunderstorm activity and severe weather.

Seek Shelter in Buildings: Employers and supervisors should know and tell workers which buildings to go to after hearing thunder or seeing lightning. NOAA recommends seeking out fully enclosed buildings with electrical wiring and plumbing. Remain in the shelter for at least **30 minutes** after hearing the last sound of thunder.

Vehicles as Shelter: If safe building structures are not accessible, employers should guide workers to hard-topped metal vehicles with rolled up windows. Remain in the vehicle for at least **30 minutes** after hearing the last sound of thunder.

Phone Safety: After hearing thunder, do not use corded phones, except in an emergency. Cell phones and cordless phones may be used safely.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Employers should have a written Emergency Action Plan (EAP), as outlined in 29 CFR 1910.38 or 29 CFR 1926.35. The EAP should include a written lightning safety protocol for outdoor workers.

IF CAUGHT OUTSIDE IN A THUNDERSTORM

If you are caught outside during a thunderstorm, follow NOAA's recommendations to decrease the risk of being struck by lightning.
Lightning is likely to strike the tallest objects in a given area—you should not be the tallest object.

Avoid isolated tall trees, hilltops, utility poles, cell phone towers, cranes, large equipment, ladders, scaffolding, or rooftops.

Avoid open areas, such as fields. Never lie flat on the ground.

Retreat to dense areas of smaller trees that are surrounded by larger trees, or retreat to low-lying areas (e.g. valleys, ditches) but watch for flooding.

Avoid water, and immediately get out of and away from bodies of water (e.g., pools, lakes).

Avoid wiring, plumbing and fencing. Stay away from all metal objects, equipment and surfaces that can conduct electricity.

Do not shelter in sheds, pavilions, tents, or covered porches.

Seek fully enclosed, substantial buildings with wiring and plumbing. A building is safe shelter as long as you are not in contact with anything that can conduct electricity (e.g., electrical equipment or cords, plumbing fixtures, corded phones). Do not lean against concrete walls or floors (which may have metal bars inside).

Source: Excerpt from the OSHA FactSheet, "Lightning Safety When Working Outdoors."

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Outdoor Hazards and Safety Tips

Excerpted from the *OSHA FactSheet*, "Working Outdoors in Warm Climates."

Hot summer months pose special hazards for outdoor workers who must protect themselves against heat, sun exposure, and other hazards. Employers and employees should know the potential hazards in their workplaces and how to manage them.

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features: numerous, irregular, or large moles; freckles; fair skin; or blond, red, or light brown hair. Here's how to block those harmful rays:

- Cover up. Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Be sure to follow application directions on the bottle or tube.
- Wear a hat. A wide brim hat, not a baseball cap, works best because it protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- Wear UV-absorbent sunglasses (eye protection). Sunglasses don't have to be expensive, but they should block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation. Before you buy sunglasses, read the product tag or label.
- Limit exposure. UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

OSHA Card—Protecting Yourself in the Sun www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3166.pdf

Heat

The combination of heat and humidity can be a serious health threat during the summer months. If you work outside (for example, at a beach resort, on a farm, at a construction site) or in a kitchen, laundry, or bakery you may be at increased risk for heat-related illness. So, take precautions. Here's how:

- Drink small amounts of water frequently.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing—cotton is good.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool shade.
- Eat smaller meals before work activity.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Work in the shade.
- Find out from your health care provider if your medications and heat don't mix.
- Know that equipment such as respirators or work suits can increase heat stress.

There are three kinds of major heat-related disorders—heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. You need to know how to recognize each one and what first aid

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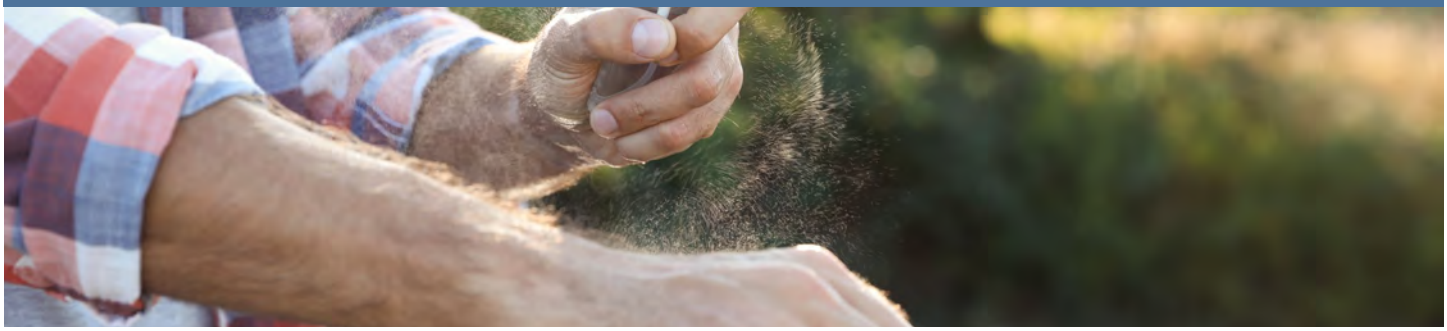

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treatment is necessary.

OSHA Heat Stress Fact Sheet: www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/heat_stress.pdf
OSHA Heat Stress Quick Card: www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3154.pdf

West Nile Virus

West Nile virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mild symptoms include fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms of severe infection include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. You can protect yourself from mosquito bites in these ways:

- Apply Picaridin or insect repellant with DEET to exposed skin.
- Spray clothing with repellents containing DEET or permethrin. (Note: Do not spray permethrin directly onto exposed skin.)
- Wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks.
- Be extra vigilant at dusk and dawn when mosquitos are most active.
- Get rid of sources of standing water (used tires, buckets) to reduce or eliminate mosquito breeding areas.

OSHA West Nile Virus Fact Sheet
www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/west_nile_virus.pdf
OSHA Safety and Health Information Bulletin: "Workplace Precautions Against West Nile Virus"
http://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib082903b.pdf

Poison Ivy-Related Plants

Poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac have poisonous sap (urushiol) in their roots, stems, leaves and fruits. The urushiol may be deposited on the skin by direct contact with the plant or by contact with contaminated objects, such as clothing, shoes, tools, and animals.

Approximately 85 percent of the general population will develop an allergy if exposed to poison ivy, oak or sumac. Forestry workers and firefighters who battle forest fires have developed rashes or lung irritations from inhaling the smoke of burning plants.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, tucked into boots. Wear cloth or leather gloves.
- Apply barrier creams to exposed skin.
- Educate workers on the identification of poison ivy, oak, and sumac plants.
- Educate workers on signs and symptoms of contact with poisonous ivy, oak, and sumac.
- Keep rubbing alcohol accessible. It removes the oily resin up to 30 minutes after exposure.

OSHA Web Page—Poisonous Plants: www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/sawmills/poison.html

-Information excerpted from: "OSHA FactSheet, "Working Outdoors in Warm Climates," www.osha.gov.

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Learn More About Poisonous Plants

Contact with Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac plants results in common skin rashes that affect millions of people annually:

» 85% of the population is sensitive to contact with these plants and will develop a rash

» 10% will have no sensitivity

» 5% will develop a severe reaction

Facts on Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac

- The rash is caused by contact with the plant's colorless or yellowish oil called urushiol.
- The plant oil is released when the plant stem or leaves are cut or crushed.
- The oil can be carried on tools, clothes, pets or in the smoke when the plant is burned.
- Once the plant touches the skin, it begins to penetrate in minutes.
- The rash appears as a line within 12–48 hours after exposure to the plant oil. Redness and swelling are followed by blisters and severe itching. Within a few days the blister becomes crusted and scaly. The rash will heal in about ten days.

Plant Identification:

Poison Ivy:

- Grows around lakes and streams in the Midwest and the East
- A woody, ropelike vine, a trailing shrub on the ground, or a free-standing shrub
- Normally three leaflets (groups of leaves all on the same small stem coming off the larger main stem), but may vary from groups of three to nine
- Leaves are green in the summer and red in the fall
- Yellow or green flowers and white berries

Poison Oak:

- Eastern (from New Jersey to Texas) grows as a low shrub; Western (along the Pacific coast) grows to six-foot-tall clumps or vines up to 30 feet long
- Oak-like leaves, usually in clusters of three
- Clusters of yellow berries

Poison Sumac:

- Grows in boggy areas, especially in the Southeast
- Rangy shrub up to 15 feet tall
- Seven to 13 smooth-edged leaflets
- Glossy pale yellow or cream-colored berries

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Immediate Response:

If you've been exposed to poison ivy, oak or sumac, you should complete the following steps:

- First, clean exposed skin with generous amounts of isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. (Don't return to the woods or yard the same day. Alcohol removes your skin's protection along with the urushiol and any new contact will cause the urushiol to penetrate twice as fast.)
- Second, wash skin with water. (Water temperature does not matter; if you're outside, it's likely only cold water will be available.)
- Third, take a regular shower with soap and warm water. Do not use soap before this point because soap will tend to pick up some of the urushiol from the surface of the skin and move it around in the lather.
- Clothes, shoes, tools and anything else that may have been in contact with the urushiol should be wiped off with alcohol and water. Be sure to wear gloves and then discard the hand covering.

Prevention

1. Learn to recognize and avoid the plant. If you find the plant growing in your yard, use gloves to pull it up by the roots. Discard the plant carefully and then discard or wash the gloves.
2. Wear plastic gloves over cotton gloves when pulling the plants. Plastic alone isn't enough because the plastic can rip, and cotton alone won't work because after a while the urushiol will soak through.
3. Whenever you're going to be around poison ivy—trying to clear it from your yard or hiking in the woods—you should wear long pants and long sleeves and, if possible, gloves and boots.
4. Never burn the plants. The urushiol can spread in the smoke and cause serious lung irritation.
5. Avoiding direct contact with the plants reduces the risk but doesn't guarantee against a reaction. Urushiol can stick to pets, garden tools, balls or anything it comes in contact with. If the urushiol isn't washed off those objects or animals, just touching them—for example, picking up a ball or petting a dog—could cause a reaction in a susceptible person. (Animals, except for a few higher primates, are not sensitive to urushiol.)
6. The two herbicides most commonly used for poison ivy—Roundup and Ortho Poison Ivy Killer—will kill other plants as well. Spraying Roundup (active ingredient glyphosate) on the foliage of young plants will kill the poison ivy; however, if the poison ivy vine is growing up your prize rhododendron or azalea, the Roundup will kill them, too.

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The Buzz on Bug Bites

Springtime not only means warmer weather, but also the re-emergence of rodents, snakes and insects. To protect yourself from any unpleasant encounters with these animals, OSHA has published the following tips:

Insects, Spiders and Ticks

- To protect yourself from biting and stinging insects, wear long pants, socks and long-sleeved shirts.
- Use insect repellents that contain DEET or Picaridin.
- Treat bites and stings with over-the-counter products that relieve pain and prevent infection.
- Avoid fire ants; their bites are painful and cause blisters.

Rodents and Wild or Stray Animals

- Dead and live animals can spread diseases such as Rat Bite Fever and Rabies.
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals.
- Avoid contact with rats or rat-contaminated buildings. If you can't avoid contact, wear protective gloves and wash your hands regularly.
- Get rid of dead animals as soon as possible.
- If bitten/scratched, get medical attention immediately.

Snakes

- Watch where you place your hands and feet when removing debris. If possible, don't place your fingers under debris you are moving. Wear heavy gloves.
- If you see a snake, step back and allow it to proceed.
- Wear boots at least 10 inches high.
- Watch for snakes sunning on fallen trees, limbs or other debris.
- A snake's striking distance is about 1/2 the total length of the snake.
- If bitten, note the color and shape of the snake's head to help with treatment.
- Keep bite victims still and calm to slow the spread of venom in case the snake is poisonous. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck out the venom. Apply first aid: lay the person down so that the bite is below the level of the heart, and cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.

Insects either bite or sting. Mosquitoes, flies, mites, chiggers and ticks use their mouth to suck blood from their victims. Honey bees, bumble bees, yellow jackets, hornets and wasps use a stinger to inject venom. Spiders use a combination of biting their victims and injecting venom through their fangs. Here's a list of summer insects to watch for:

Honey Bees and Other Little Stingers

- Pay special attention to open soft drink containers and glasses. Swallowing an insect can be dangerous, as a sting inside the throat can swell your airway.
- If an insect lands on you or your food, blow or gently brush the insect away. It is only investigating or foraging.
- Avoid wearing bright colors, flowery prints and black clothing, which attracts stinging insects, as do the odors from soaps, perfumes, lotions and hair-care products.
- If stung, brush the insect from your skin to prevent an additional sting. The honey bee leaves its stinger behind along with an attached venom sac that continues to pump toxins into its victims. Scrape the stinger away from the skin with a fingernail or credit card.

Non-allergic reactions usually last a few hours. Redness and swelling may develop around the sting bite, and localized pain and itching are common.

Mosquitoes

- These biting insects are attracted by body heat and carbon dioxide from our breath, as well as sweet odors and bright or flowery clothing. They live where water collects, such as bird baths, canoes and plant pots.

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Ticks

- Ticks feed on blood. They "hitchhike" onto their victims from grass or leaves, attach themselves and begin to feed. A tick's bite is painless and can remain embedded for days without the victim knowing.
- To prevent a tick bite, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat when in wooded or grassy areas. After returning home, inspect yourself carefully for ticks, or have someone else check you out.
- If you find a tick, pull it off using tweezers. Grab the tick close to the skin, and without twisting, pull away with steady pressure. Or, lift the tick slightly upward, and pull parallel to the skin until the tick detaches. Common remedies such as petroleum jelly, rubbing alcohol, and a hot match are not effective.
- If rash or flu-like symptoms (fever, headache, joint and muscle pain) develop within 3 to 10 days, you could be infected with Lyme disease. Seek medical attention immediately. Symptoms include one-sided paralysis, arthritis, meningitis, and nerve and heart damage.

Spiders

- Unless you are allergic to spider venom, bites cause little harm. Black widow and brown recluse bites are exceptions. Black widows are found primarily in warm regions. Females, which are more aggressive, have a large, shiny black body and a red hourglass marking on their abdomen.
- Within 15 minutes of being bitten by a black widow, a dull, numbing pain develops at the site. Faint red bite marks appear, followed by muscle stiffness, cramps, nausea, vomiting, sweating, and dizziness. An anti-venom is available and has to be administered soon after the bite occurs.
- The brown recluse is most common in Midwestern states but has spread to the Eastern United States. It is tan to dark brown with a dark, violin-shaped mark on its back. Its bite may go unnoticed for 6 to 8 hours before a red swollen and blistered wound appears, giving it a bulls-eye appearance. Fever, weakness, vomiting, joint pain and a rash may follow.

To avoid bites, wear work gloves when handling boxes, firewood, lumber, or any other items that have been stored for a long time. Shake stored clothing vigorously to dislodge any spiders, and inspect carefully before wearing.

For a Bite or Sting, Follow These Steps

- Wash the bite with soap and water.
- Apply a cold pack for 15-20 minutes to reduce the pain and swelling.
- Use aspirin or acetaminophen to relieve pain.
- Use a topical steroid cream to further relieve itching and swelling.
- If the victim shows signs of an allergic reaction, infection, or has other unexplained symptoms, seek medical assistance immediately.

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Preventing Heat-Related Illness

Excessively warm temperatures during the summer months means an increased risk for heat illness for those who work or participate in outdoor activities or inside environments that cannot be cooled by an air conditioning unit.

The following information, excerpted from the *OSHA® FactSheet Protecting Workers from the Effects of Heat*, provides important information on the types of illnesses that can be caused from activities in hot environments. Also discussed are the first aid measures to take should you or a co-worker become affected by heat-related illness.

At times, workers may be required to work in hot environments for long periods. When the human body is unable to maintain a normal temperature, heat illnesses can occur and may result in death. It is also important to consider that hot work environments may exist indoors. This article provides information for employers on measures they should take to prevent worker illnesses and death caused by heat stress.

What is Heat Illness?
The following are illnesses that may result from exposure to heat in the workplace.

Heat Stroke is the most serious heat-related health problem. Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature regulating system fails and body temperature rises to critical levels (greater than 104°F). *This is a medical emergency that may result in death!* The signs of heat stroke are confusion, loss of consciousness, and seizures. Workers experiencing heat stroke have a very high body temperature and may stop sweating. If a worker shows signs of possible heat stroke, *get medical help immediately,* and call 911. Until medical help arrives, move the worker to a shady, cool area and remove as much clothing as possible. Wet the worker with cool water and circulate the air to speed cooling. Place cold wet cloths, wet towels or ice all over the body or soak the worker's clothing with cold water.

Heat Exhaustion is the next most serious heat-related health problem. The signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion are headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, confusion, thirst, heavy sweating and a body temperature greater than 100.4°F. Workers with heat exhaustion should be removed from the hot area and given liquids to drink. Cool the worker with cold compresses to the head, neck, and face or have the worker wash his or her head, face and neck with cold water. Encourage frequent sips of cool water. Workers with signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion should be taken to a clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation and treatment. Make sure that someone stays with the worker until help arrives. If symptoms worsen, call 911 and get help immediately.

Heat Cramps are muscle pains usually caused by the loss of body salts and fluid during sweating. Workers with heat cramps should replace fluid loss by drinking water and/or carbohydrate-electrolyte replacement liquids (e.g., sports drinks) every 15 to 20 minutes.

Heat Rash is the most common problem in hot work environments. Heat rash is caused by sweating and looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. Heat rash may appear on the neck, upper chest, groin, under the breasts and elbow creases. The best treatment for heat rash is to provide a cooler, less humid work environment. The rash area should be kept dry. Powder may be applied to increase comfort. Ointments and creams should **not** be used on a heat rash. Anything that makes the skin warm or moist may make the rash worse.

Prevention Made Simple: Program Elements

Heat Illness Prevention Program key elements include:

- A Person Designated to Oversee the Heat Illness Prevention Program
- Hazard Identification
- Water. Rest. Shade Message
- Acclimatization
- Modified Work Schedules
- Training
- Monitoring for Signs and Symptoms
- Emergency Planning and Response

Designate a Person to Oversee the Heat Stress Program
Identify someone trained in the hazards, physiological responses to heat, and controls. This person can develop, implement and manage the program.

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

Hazard Identification
Hazard identification involves recognizing heat hazards and the risk of heat illness due to high temperature, humidity, sun and other thermal exposures, work demands, clothing or PPE and personal risk factors.

Identification tools include: OSHA's Heat Smartphone App; a Wet Bulb Glove Thermometer (WBGT), which is a measure of heat stress in direct sunlight that takes into account temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun and cloud cover; and the National Weather Service Heat Index. Exposure to full sun can increase heat index values up to 15°F.

Water.Rest.Shade.
Ensure that cool drinking water is available and easily accessible. (Note: Certain beverages, such as caffeine and alcohol can lead to dehydration.)

Encourage workers to drink a liter of water over one hour, which is about one cup every fifteen minutes.

Provide or ensure that fully shaded or air-conditioned areas are available for resting and cooling down.

Acclimatization
Acclimatization is a physical change that allows the body to build tolerance to working in the heat. It occurs by gradually increasing workloads and exposure and taking frequent breaks for water and rest in the shade. Full acclimatization may take up to 14 days or longer depending on factors relating to the individual, such as increased risk of heat illness due to certain medications or medical conditions, or the environment.

New workers and those returning from a prolonged absence should begin with 20% of the workload on the first day, increasing incrementally by no more than 20% each subsequent day.

During a rapid change leading to excessively hot weather or conditions such as a heat wave, even experienced workers should begin on the first day of work in excessive heat with 50% of the normal workload and time spent in the hot environment, 60% on the second day, 80% on day three, and 100% on the fourth day.

Modified Work Schedules
Altering work schedules may reduce workers' exposure to heat. For instance:

- Reschedule all non-essential outdoor work for days with a reduced heat index.
- Schedule the more physically demanding work during the cooler times of the day.
- Schedule less physically demanding work during warmer times of the day.
- Rotate workers and split shifts, and/or add extra workers.
- Work/Rest cycles, using established industry guidelines.
- Stop work if essential control methods are inadequate or unavailable when the risk of heat illness is very high.

Keep in mind that very early starting times may result in increased fatigue. Also, early morning hours tend to have higher humidity levels.

Training
Provide training in a language and manner workers understand, including information on health effects of heat, the symptoms of heat illness, how and when to respond to symptoms, and how to prevent heat illness.

Monitoring for Heat Illness Symptoms
Establish a system to monitor and report the signs and symptoms of heat illness or stress to improve early detection and action. Using a buddy system will assist supervisors when watching for signs of heat illness.

Emergency Planning and Response
Have an emergency plan in place and communicate it to supervisors and workers. Emergency plan considerations include:

- What to do when someone is showing signs of heat illness. This can make the difference between life and death.
- How to contact emergency help.
- How long it will take for emergency help to arrive and training workers on appropriate first-aid measures until help arrives.
- Consider seeking advice from a healthcare professional in preparing a plan.

Engineering Controls Specific to Indoor Workplaces
Indoor workplaces may be cooled by using air conditioning or increased ventilation, assuming that cooler air is available from the outside. Other methods to reduce indoor temperature include: providing reflective shields to redirect radiant heat, insulating hot surfaces, and decreasing water vapor pressure, e.g., by sealing steam leaks and keeping floors dry. The use of fans to increase the air speed over the worker will improve heat exchange between the skin surface and the air, unless the air temperature is higher than the skin temperature. However, increasing air speeds above 300 ft. per min. may actually have a warming effect. Industrial hygiene personnel can assess the degree of heat stress caused by the work environment and make recommendations for reducing heat exposure.

Additional Information
For more information on this and other issues affecting workers or heat stress, visit: www.osha.gov/heat; www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress; and www.noaa.gov/features/earthobs_0508/heat.html.

Source: OSHA FactSheet, "Protecting Workers from the Effects of Heat," www.osha.gov.

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Preventing Driver Fatigue

Just-in-time shipping schedules and a 24-hour workplace contribute to making driver fatigue a major problem in industry today. Drowsy drivers are involved in many fatal traffic incidents, frequently taking occupants of other vehicles with them.

The statistics are staggering and the more time you spend on the road; the greater the odds are that you'll be involved in such an incident. On-the-job driving involves heavy responsibility, so make sure you get enough rest to drive alert.

Here are some tips for staying awake when you drive for your job, to and from work, or on your own time:

- Get enough sleep before you drive. For most people, eight hours of sleep every 24 hours is about right, but everyone is different.
- If you have a choice, don't drive during your normal sleeping hours. If you are accustomed to being asleep at 2 a.m. you could easily doze off behind the wheel at that hour.
- If you start to get sleepy, pull off the road in a safe place and take a nap. Be sure to lock your vehicle doors and be prepared to drive away promptly if your security is threatened.
- Plan your route with overnight accommodations or highway rest areas in mind. Make reservations at a motel or have alternative accommodation lined up. Vacationers can use sources such as an automobile association to locate rest areas. Planning these stops in advance keeps you from driving around tired looking for a place to spend the night.
- Eat lightly and often rather than larger meals. The meat and potato platter, dessert included at the truck stop can make you sleepy.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages and other drugs. Even ordinary medications such as cold and cough remedies can contain ingredients to make you drowsy.
- Keep your vehicle interior fairly cool with plenty of fresh air.
- Shift position frequently, instead of remaining static for long periods of time.
- Take breaks at least every two hours. Walk around in the fresh air for awhile instead of just walking from your vehicle to a warm coffee shop. A fast paced walk around the rest area can do wonders to get your circulation going again to keep you alert.
- Switch with your co-driver every couple of hours. You can also ask your co-driver to stay awake to keep you company and keep an extra set of eyes on the road.
- If you are alone, use your radio, tape or CD player for company.
- Keep your eyes moving. Look at the road and traffic far ahead, check your mirrors often and scan the sides of the road.
- Check your instrument panel often, making sure your speed is within posted limits and not becoming erratic because of fatigue or inattention. Consider turning your instrument lights down low to keep your eyes adjusted to the darkness outside.

Remember that the only substitute for sleep is sleep. Short-term measures may help you stay alert for awhile, but eventually you will need to sleep.

-Information excerpted from Safety Toolbox Talks, "Driver Fatigue," www.safetytoolboxtalks.com

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Defensive Driving

Consider these statistics:

- Traffic accidents are the No. 1 cause of death for people between the ages of 1 and 44
- 80% of all accidents happen at speeds **less** than 30 mph
- 70% of all accidents happen within 25 miles of home
- 95% of all accidents are caused by driver error or indecision; only 5% are caused by mechanical failure
- Over 50% of all motor vehicle-related fatalities are alcohol-related

Defensive drivers are aware of the following hazards:

- Insufficient following distance
- Tailgaters
- Blind spots
- Hydroplaning
- Traction
- Nighttime driving conditions

Safety measures / best practices used by defensive drivers include:

- Scanning the roadway while driving
- Taking extra caution when backing up the vehicle
- Awareness of lane positioning
- Using correct passing techniques
- Knowing which situations reduce vehicle traction and how to control the vehicle in a skid
- Understanding reaction time, braking distance and the importance of covering the brake
- Using lights appropriate to driving conditions and the vehicle's turn signals for proper communication of maneuvers
- Conducting vehicle inspections and preventive maintenance
- Knowing the negative effects drugs and alcohol have on driving

As a driver, always:

☑ Expect the unexpected!

☑ Wear your seat belt—it could save your life!

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Distracted Driving: A Common Cause of Accidents

Driver distraction is cited as one of the most common contributors to traffic accidents. According to a study published by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), various forms of driver distraction are estimated to contribute to 8 out of every 10 crashes. This figure translates into almost 4 million crashes per year.

Another study, conducted by the American Automobile Association (AAA), concluded that the following actions taken by drivers while operating their vehicles contributed to distracted driving-related accidents:

- **29.4% distracted by someone or something outside the vehicle**
- **11.4% adjusting the radio**
- **10.9% distracted by another person in the car**
- **2.8% adjusting heat or air conditioning controls**
- **1.7% eating**
- **1.5% using a cellphone**

With these factors in mind, consider the following tips to help avoid driving distractions.

- If your state/company allows the use of cellphones while driving, make sure conditions are safe and keep your conversations brief. Keep your eyes on the road by using a hands-free telephone, and using speed or voice dialing whenever possible.
- Pull over if you must use your cellphone to check an email message or send a text. Never read or reply to email or text messages while operating your vehicle.
- Limit interaction with passengers while driving. Avoid taking your eyes off the road, and keep both hands on the wheel.
- Don't drive when you are angry or upset. Wait until you have cooled down or resolved the problem before operating your vehicle.
- If you are driving in an unfamiliar vehicle, take time before operating the vehicle to become familiar with the controls. Also be sure to adjust the seat and mirror prior to driving. Walk around the vehicle before driving it and check for problems such as fluid leaks, bald tires or other issues that could contribute to an accident.
- Take the time to pre-program your favorite radio stations and arrange your CDs and other listening media in an accessible location before driving. Don't try to retrieve objects that have fallen onto the floor while driving.
- Avoid eating or drinking while operating your vehicle.

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Driving Safety: Fatigue and Motor Vehicle Accidents

Drivers most at risk for becoming involved in a fatigue-related motor vehicle accident include those who are:

- Making long-haul trips
- Driving at night or in the early morning
- Traveling alone
- Driving while taking medication or under the influence of alcohol
- Business travelers

Driver Fatigue Facts

- Contributes annually to 100,000 crashes and $12.5 billion in losses
- 27% of drivers admit to dozing off
- 30%–40% of truck crashes result from fatigue
- 1,500 deaths result from motor vehicle accidents involving fatigue

Driver Signs of Fatigue

- Drifting out of their lane
- Unable to remember the last few miles traveled
- Loss of focus, including daydreaming
- Repeatedly yawning
- Heavy eyes and head bobbing

Driver Fatigue Prevention

Prepare for a long trip by getting enough rest prior to hitting the road. Don't rely on playing the radio loudly or opening windows to stay awake. Coffee and other sources of caffeine may help, but the best remedy is to be well rested before you go. When you feel the onset of fatigue, stop in a safe and secure place to rest.

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Cellphones: Tools or Death Traps

A cellphone can be a very useful tool when it comes to communicating with family members and conducting business operations. It allows for communication in various ways, such as conversation, text messaging and email. However, increased reliance on cellphones has led to a rise in the number of people who use the devices while driving.

There are two dangers associated with driving and cellphone use, including text messaging. First, drivers must take their eyes off the road when dialing the phone. Second, people can become so absorbed in their conversations that their ability to concentrate on the act of driving is severely impaired, jeopardizing the safety of vehicle occupants and pedestrians.

CONSIDER THESE FACTS

- As of May 2007 in the United States, more than 236 million people subscribed to wireless communication devices such as cellphones, compared with approximately 4.3 million in 1990, according to the CTIA-The Wireless Association.
- A December 2005 observational survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that at any given daylight moment, approximately 10% of U.S. drivers are using some type of phone, whether hand-held or hands-free.
- A 2007 survey from Nationwide Insurance estimated that 73% of drivers use cellphones.
- A 2003 article published by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis estimated that cellphone use by drivers may cause approximately 2,600 deaths, 330,000 moderate to critical injuries and 1.5 million instances of property damage in America per year.

DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC

Something that you should consider when using a cellphone while driving is to first purchase a hands-free device. This is a good way to reduce the chances of not taking your eyes off the road when dialing or completing other cellphone tasks. Second, try not to use your cellphone when driving unless you absolutely have to. If you must use your cellphone, consider pulling off to the side of the road until your conversation is complete.

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IF YOU MUST USE YOUR CELLPHONE FOR COMMUNICATION

- Obey all state and local laws regarding in-vehicle cellphone use.
- Get to know your cellphone's features, such as speed dial and redial. Memorize your keypad.
- Do not use text messaging or similar protracted data functions while driving.
- Always use hands-free devices, such as the ear/mic accessory and phone cradle.
- Position the cellphone within easy reach.
- Let the person you are speaking with know you are driving.
- Suspend conversations during hazardous situations, including congested traffic or bad weather.
- Never take notes or look up information while driving.
- Dial sensibly and assess the traffic. Except during an emergency, place your calls when you are not moving or before pulling into traffic.
- Do not engage in stressful or emotional conversations that may divert your attention from the road or your responsibilities.
- Keep any necessary conversations brief.
- Hang up without warning in precarious traffic situations. You can always explain later why you disconnected.

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Visitor Management

Effective visitor management procedures are an important component for creating a safe and secure school environment.

The procedure typically used by schools for visitor management programs is to have the visitor sign themselves in on a sign-in sheet. After signing in, a sticker is issued to the visitor that identifies who they are. The security risk in this system is that oftentimes, the signature on the sign-in sheet is illegible and the issued visitor sticker does not adhere securely to clothing.

The following procedure was developed by RETA Security, Inc. and is designed to ensure that all visitors are accounted for from the time they enter the school to the time that they leave the building.

- When a visitor arrives, the school receptionist or other designated personnel should greet the visitor and ask them for their photo ID. The school personnel should read the visitor's name on the supplied ID and print it legibly along with the time of the visitor's arrival, onto a corresponding school visitor sign-in sheet.
- After entering the visitor's name on the sign-in sheet, verify that the picture on the visitor's ID matches the person that is standing there.
- Keep the visitor's ID and put it in a designated, secure place in the office. Next, give the visitor a school-issued "Visitor" badge that hangs on a colored lanyard. Use a break-away lanyard so as not to endanger the visitor. The lanyards used for visitors should be the same designated color so that visitors are easily distinguishable from other personnel in the school building.
- It is important to consider using lanyards in another color for all school staff to wear so that they are also easily distinguishable from visitors and other personnel who may be in the building.
- Have the visitor put on the lanyard. The ID portion of the lanyard will hang in the middle of the person's body and will be visible at all times. This ensures that the lanyard does not fall off, is misplaced or not visible, which often happens with stickers. The important component of this system is not the ID, but the colored lanyard, which designates the person as a visitor and is visible on the person at all times.
- At the conclusion of the visit, the visitor must come back to the main office to sign out. A school receptionist or other designated personnel must sign the visitor out and write down their time of departure on the sign-in sheet.
- Ask the visitor to return the school's lanyard and then give back the photo ID to the visitor.

The importance of signing out a visitor at the end of their visit is critical to emergency situations. Should the school encounter an emergency scenario, they now have a record of who came into and left the building. This makes it easier for emergency responders to account for all persons who were in the building on that particular day.

-Information excerpted from *School Safety Strategies, Visitor Management,* RETA Security, Inc., http://www.retasecurity.com/.

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Safety Through Teamwork

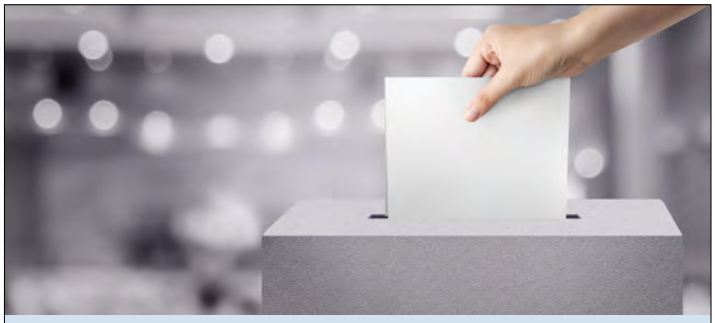
Teamwork keeps production high and helps prevent accidents.

Utilizing a teamwork approach to safety can minimize the likelihood of an accident occurring. All we have to do is to think of the other person's safety as well as our own. This inserts the Golden Rule into workplace safety. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Protect others as you would like to be protected.

Let's use safe driving as an example. A safe driver not only looks out for their own safety, but also makes sure they don't endanger anyone else. The safe driver may yield their right-of-way to help another driver facing a difficult situation. They slow down to let a driver cut back in after a failed attempt to pass due to a hazard in the opposite direction.

It is not just a matter of who has the right-of-way, rather collectively recognizing that everyone is better off if an accident is avoided. The safe driver knows that someday they may do a foolish or reckless thing on the road that will take some teamwork from another person to prevent an accident. What applies on the road also applies on the job. It is not just a matter of your working safely and following all the rules yourself.

You have to consider your coworkers' safety as well. You may need to lend a hand to prevent or avoid an accident that may involve them. You can never tell what kind of situation is going to arise in which teamwork is needed to prevent an accident. You have to solve each one as it arises by working together and helping each other.



Teamwork & Safety

1. **If you run across an idea for making the job a safer place to work; do not keep it to yourself. Let others know—especially at safety meetings.**
2. **When you see a safety issue that needs to be addressed, report it to management or a safety team member immediately.**
3. **If a specific task is too much for you to handle, ask for help. Conversely, give other people a hand when asked.**
4. **Think about the other person—their safety may depend on you.**

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Seven Strategies to Improve Safety Communication and Build Commitment

1. Don't Look Back

- To improve safety, we need to move conversation from recounting the past to focusing on the future. Then, we can develop an action plan.
- If an individual is dwelling on a negative past experience, to direct the flow of conversation to the future, you should:
  - » First of all, recognize and appreciate the other person's thoughts and feelings.
  - » Then, shift the focus of the conversation to the future and what we want to achieve. This should result in what we need to do in the present to accomplish it.

2. Seek Commitment

- Safety-related conversations are productive when someone commits to a specific action or task.
- Now, you can proceed with the conversation and ask this person how you can support them to accomplish this action or task.

3. Stop and Listen

- Passion can sometimes result in an overly directive approach when trying to change safety behavior in another person.
- It is better to give advice in a non-directive manner, over a long period of time to appear to be less directive.
- The objective is to become a passive catalyst—facilitating a safety-behavior change on the other person's terms.

4. Ask Questions First

- Use a sincere and caring demeanor; avoid a sarcastic or demeaning tone.
- Emphasize a positive-observed behavior, then direct the conversation to an "at-risk" behavior by asking, "Is there a safer way to perform the task?" The employee may just surprise you with something you don't know.
- It will be only natural if you first receive excuses to rationalize the "at-risk" behavior, but your continued questioning will eventually draw out the truth.

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5. Use Words Wisely to Deliver Behavior-Focused Advice

- Begin the conversation with the employee using words so they appear to know what they are doing e.g., "As you know…"
- This method will maintain a positive, team approach to safer performance.

6. Beware of Bias

- Personal biases affect everyone's opinion, what we hear, interpret, say and process.
- Utilize the principle of reciprocity. By listening first, you increase the odds that the other person will listen to you without "a tune-out filter."
- Pay close attention to body language, tone of voice, passion and commitment in their message to solve a safety message.

7. Plan Words to Improve Self-Image

- If you focus on new positive qualities rather than past inadequacies in your conversation with others and with yourself, you will improve your self-image and self-esteem.
- Improving your own safety self-image will result in more effective safety conversation with others—which will result in a total safety culture!

Use this conversation checklist to get the most out of everyday conversation, but especially when it pertains to safety behavior:

- ❑ **Listen attentively.**
- ❑ **Emphasize positive actions you've observed.**
- ❑ **Draw out responses from the other person.**
- ❑ **Get them to tell you, in their own words, what they ought to be doing in order to be safer.**
- ❑ **Ask questions with a sincere and caring demeanor.**
- ❑ **Act as if you don't know the answer, even though you think you do.**
- ❑ **Shift the focus to future ways of improving safety.**
- ❑ **Seek a verbal commitment to embrace those ideas.**
- ❑ **Bring the conversation back to the present by developing an action plan to achieve the improvements you desire.**

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Hazard Recognition and Control

An Effective Self-Inspection Program is designed to:

- Identify unsafe acts and conditions before an accident
- Provide a safe work environment through the implementation of control measures
- Ensure compliance with state/federal regulations

Hazard Classification

- Slip, trip, fall—same level
- Slip, trip, fall—different level
- Struck by or against:
  - » Falling or flying objects
  - » Protruding objects
  - » Sharp objects
- Caught in, on, or between:
  - » Pinch points
  - » Moving loads
  - » Trapped or narrowing spaces
- Contact with:
  - » Atmospheric contaminants
  - » Cold exposure
  - » Heat exposure
  - » Electrical or fire
  - » Chemical
  - » Noise
- Overexertion/manual material handling

Hazard Identification and Analysis

The Scope of a Workplace Inspection includes:

- Facility Design and Layout:
  - » Appropriate space
  - » Adjacent tasks
  - » Noise and atmospheric hazards
  - » Adequate illumination
- Equipment and Tools:
  - » Preventive maintenance
  - » Appropriate for task
  - » Required guarding and safety devices in place
- Activity or Process:
  - » Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)—appropriate and available, storage and condition
  - » Appropriate material handling
- Housekeeping and Maintenance:
  - » Walking/working surfaces
  - » Storage areas
  - » Electrical concerns
- Emergency Response:
  - » Fire extinguisher
  - » Evacuation response—posted
- Workplace Inspection Format:
  - » Designated responsibility
  - » Frequency
  - » System to document noted hazards
  - » Follow-up procedure

Hazard Control

- Eliminate the Hazardous Element:
  - » Remove
  - » Substitute for something less hazardous
  - » Personal Protective Equipment—create a barrier
- Engineer the Hazardous Element:
  - » Mechanical devices or guards
  - » Isolation
- Warn of the Hazardous Element:
  - » Administrative control through rules and training
  - » Post signage

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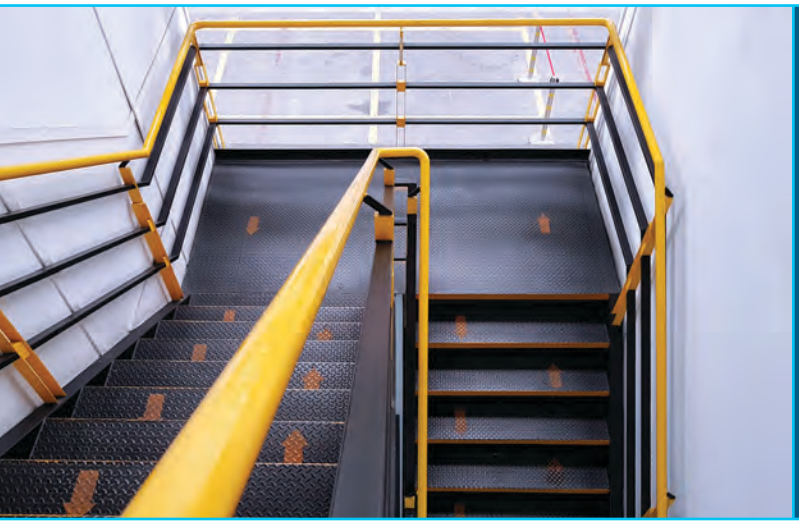

Keep Your Exits Clear

By Stan Szpytek, Gallagher Bassett Loss Control Associate

Your building's exits are one of the most important life-safety systems built into your business. While often taken for granted, exits are usually seen from a single dimension. Most people visiting your building, especially your customers and clients, tend to only consider one exit. Of course, that "one" exit is the way that they entered the building.

During an emergency situation such as a fire, it is imperative that building occupants consider all of the exits as a means of escape. As the operator of a business or owner of a building, it is your responsibility to keep all exits free and clear of all obstructions. In general, exit doors must be kept unlocked from the inside during business hours as well.

Unfortunately, we saw two terrible tragedies in 2003 where a compromised means of egress led to the deaths of over 120 people. Incidents in Chicago and Rhode Island exemplified what a crowd of people will do during an emergency situation when all of a building's exits are not properly utilized. Both disasters occurred in public assembly occupancies (nightclubs) where the majority of deaths were attributed to the fact that most of the occupants rushed to the main exit of the establishment instead of utilizing alternate emergency exits.

People will do what comes naturally to them during a stressful emergency situation, and that is to try to leave a space the same way that they came into a space. Fire and building codes require that multiple exits be installed in all buildings used for public assembly and other business types (office, commercial, retail, industrial, etc.).

It is the responsibility of building owners and business operators to make sure that all exits are clearly marked. Additionally, it is essential that all employees know the location of all the building's exits and understand that the closest exit must be utilized during an emergency evacuation. When a crisis strikes, employees must help direct building occupants to safety by guiding them to the closest exit. While the closest exit may not be commonly used to enter the building, it is likely the fastest way to leave the building during a potential disaster or required evacuation.

A common problem that emerges with the maintenance of exits and exit paths within a building is that they are often obstructed or partially obstructed with storage and other items. Secondary exits, exit hallways and emergency exits are sometimes blocked with boxes, workstations, garbage containers and other obstructions. Building managers and employees must be aware of the importance of all exits and do everything they can to maintain proper clearance around these critical life-safety features.

Building occupants do not realize the importance of the means of egress until it is compromised or completely inaccessible during an emergency. Help ensure the safety of your occupancy by training all your employees to know where all the building's exits are located and when to use them.

Stan Szpytek is a retired deputy fire chief and fire marshal that served with a Chicago area fire department for 26 years. He is also the founder and president of Fire and Life-Safety Strategies, LLC (FLS), based in Mesa, Arizona.

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Practicing Good Housekeeping

Many painful and sometimes disabling injuries are caused when employees are struck by falling objects or trip over objects they did not see. Many injuries and incidents of property damage stem from fires caused by poor housekeeping practices and improper storage of flammable materials. The best protection against these hazards is to practice good housekeeping.

When materials are stored properly with adequate space or clearance to move through or work within the storage area, accidents are prevented. With some planning before laying out a job, tripping hazards can be avoided, and many other sprains, fractures and bruises that result from falls can be prevented.

Aside from the accident prevention benefits, good housekeeping means efficient performance. When materials, tools and equipment all have a place for orderly storage and are returned to their proper places after use, they are easier to find, and easier to inspect for damage and wear.

The following safety procedures are recommended.

- Keep work areas and storage facilities clean, neat and orderly.
- All aisles, stairways, passageways, exits and access ways to buildings should be kept free from obstructions at all times. All grease and water spills should be removed from traffic areas at once.
- Do not place supplies on top of lockers, hampers, boxes or other moveable containers.
- When piling materials for storage, make sure the base is firm and level. Cross-tie each layer. Keep aisles level and not stacked too high. Keep aisles clear and with adequate space to work in them.
- When storing materials overhead on balconies, provide adequate toe boards to prevent objects from rolling over the edge.
- When storing materials suspended from racks or hooks, secure them from falling and route walkways a safe distance from the surface beneath.
- Tools, equipment, machinery and work areas are to be maintained in a clean and safe manner. Defects and unsafe conditions should be reported to your supervisor.
- Return tools and equipment to their proper place when not in use.

- Lay out extension cords, air hoses, water hoses, ladders, pipes, tools, etc., in such a way as to minimize tripping hazards or obstructions to traffic.
- Clean up spills immediately to avoid slipping hazards. In the event the removal cannot be done immediately, the area should be appropriately guarded, signed or roped off. Snow shall be removed from all access sidewalks and exterior stairs to buildings as soon as practicable.
- Nail points, ends of loop or tie wires, etc., should not be left exposed when packing and unpacking boxes, crates, barrels, etc. Nails are to be removed as soon as lumber is disassembled.
- Sharp or pointed articles should be stored to prevent people from coming in contact with sharp edges or points.
- All packing materials should be properly disposed of to prevent fire.
- Wastebaskets are to be emptied on a daily basis into approved containers.
- Adequate lighting in obscure areas should be secured for the protection of both employees and the public.
- All switches or drives on machinery should be shut down, locked out and tagged with a “Do Not Touch—Men Working” sign before cleaning, greasing, oiling, or making adjustments or repairs.
- Control of fuse boxes should be kept closed at all times and clear of coats, rags, bottles, etc.
- Extension cords should not be run across aisles or through oil or water. Cords should be inspected for kinks, worn insulation and exposed strands of wire before use.
- When fuses blow continually, it is an indication of an overload or short. This condition should be reported to your supervisor.
- Keep electrical equipment properly oiled, and free of grease and dirt.
- To prevent static sparks, keep drive belts dressed. Also check belts for proper tension to prevent overloading motors.
- Fire inspections and prevention measures should be maintained.
- Keep safety in mind when selecting housekeeping supplies and equipment—try to minimize the use of chemicals that cause skin irritations, have harmful vapors, are combustible or are otherwise harmful to the user.
- All containers of chemicals should be clearly labeled so there is no question of what they contain.

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Personal Protective Equipment

OSHA Standard 1910.132

According to OSHA, "Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as 'PPE,' is equipment worn to minimize exposure to a variety of hazards." Safety glasses, hard hats and gloves are examples of PPE designed to protect the eyes, head and hands.

Eye Protection—1910.135
**Must satisfy ANSI Z87.1-1989*

You should always use the correct eye and face protection if you work with:

- Molten metals
- Liquid chemicals
- Hazardous gases
- Flying particles
- Injurious radiant energy

Safety glasses are the basic form of eye protection:

- Coverage from the front and sides is required anytime there is a hazard from flying objects.
- Detachable side protectors are now acceptable.
- Types of eye and face protection include: safety glasses, goggles, face shields, welding helmets, or full hoods.

Head Protection—1910.135
**Must satisfy ANSI Z89.1-1986.*

Head protection is required if you work where there is a risk of injury from falling objects or if you work near exposed electrical conductors which could contact the head.

Classification of hard hats:

- **Class G** hard hats are made from insulating material to protect you from falling objects and electric shocks by voltages of up to 2,200 volts.
- **Class E** hard hats are made from insulating material to protect you from falling objects and electric shocks by voltages of up to 20,000 volts.
- **Class C** hard hats are designed to protect you from falling objects, but are not designed for use around live electric wires or where corrosive substances are present.
- The shell of the hat is designed to absorb some of the impact.
- The suspension, which consists of the headband and strapping, is even more critical for absorbing impact. It must be adjusted to fit the wearer and to keep the shell a minimum distance of one-and-one fourth inches above the wearer's head.
- Hard hats are tested to withstand the impact of an eight-pound weight dropped at five feet—that's about the same as a two-pound hammer dropped at 20 feet and landing on your head.
- Hard hats must also meet other requirements including weight, flammability, and electrical insulation.

(Continued on page 2)

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Foot Protection—1910.136
**Must satisfy ANSI Z41.1-1991*

Foot injuries are most likely to occur:

- When heavy or sharp objects fall on your foot;
- When something rolls over your foot; or
- When you step on an object that pierces the sole of your shoe.
- If you work around exposed electrical wires or connections, you'll need to wear metal-free non-conductive shoes or boots.
- Rubber or synthetic footwear may be needed when working around chemicals.
- Foot guards and heel and ankle shields may be necessary for your particular work.
- Your company safety official will recommend the personal foot protection that is best for you.

Hand Protection—1910.138
You must wear hand protection when you are exposed to hazards such as those from skin absorption of harmful substances, severe cuts or lacerations, severe abrasions, punctures, chemical burns, thermal burns, and harmful temperature extremes.

Personal protection for the eyes, face, head and extremities, shall be provided, used, and maintained in a sanitary and reliable condition. PPE use is mandated by the hazards of processes or environment, chemical hazards, radiological hazards, or mechanical irritants encountered in a manner capable of causing injury or impairment in the function of any part of the body through absorption, ingestion, inhalation, or physical contact.

Per OSHA regulations, employees must know:

- When the equipment is necessary;
- What equipment to use;
- How to properly put on, adjust and remove the equipment
- The limitations of the equipment; and
- Proper care, maintenance and disposal practices

PPE Guidelines

1. Always inspect your PPE prior to use and report to your supervisor if a problem exists.
2. PPE must fit properly—PPE only creates a barrier and does not eliminate the hazard.
3. Become familiar with how to clean and properly maintain your equipment.
4. Always properly store your PPE for the next use.
5. If your equipment is damaged, know how to repair or replace it.

https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/osha3151.pdf

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Personal Safety Responsibility

Creating and maintaining a safe work environment is not the sole responsibility of one individual or department. Workplace safety requires a team effort. Everyone must do their part to ensure the safety of themselves and their coworkers. What does this mean for you as an employee? This means that you are responsible for your actions in the workplace and can be held accountable for these actions. You cannot and should not hide behind an excuse or point the finger when an incident occurs. You play a vital role in promoting and maintaining a safe work environment. Keeping that in mind, you should adhere to the following guidelines to promote a safe work environment for yourself and your coworkers.

Preventing Incidents

- Always follow all company safety rules, policies and procedures.
- Attend all safety training sessions offered by your employer. Taking short-cuts is not an excuse. Take initiative and learn how to safely perform your job duties.
- Familiarize yourself with all OSHA safety requirements pertaining to the place you work.
- Read and understand all applicable Safety Data Sheets (SDS) to familiarize yourself with hazards associated with the substances or materials you work with.
- Get to know the emergency and evacuation procedures for your workplace.
- Know the location of all emergency stops for the equipment you work around.
- Never operate equipment that you have not been properly trained on.
- **Ask questions!** If you are or unsure or need clarification on a process or procedure it is important to ask a question before an incident occurs.

Maintain a Safe Work Environment

- Keep your work area clean and organized. Dirty or cluttered work areas are potential slip, trip, fall injuries waiting to happen.
- Always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). These items are meant to protect you.
- Maintain your PPE to ensure proper protection. If you notice that your PPE is worn or malfunctioning notify your supervisor.
- Stay focused on the task at hand. Distractions can lead to injuries to both you and your coworkers.

Reacting to Unsafe Conditions

- If you notice an unsafe or hazardous condition notify your supervisor immediately. Do not wait for an incident to occur before reporting it.
- Report any accidents or near-misses to your supervisor. Bringing these incidents to your supervisor's attention allows the problem to be investigated which will help prevent any further injuries.
- Place a sign or other barrier around an unsafe condition until it can be fixed.
- If you recognize a way to make the workplace safer suggest these improvements to your supervisor.

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Safe Work Habits Pay Off

A habit can be defined as the tendency or disposition to act in a certain way. Our ability to acquire habits—whether good or bad—is directly related to our need for satisfaction. The importance of developing safe work habits on the job is that we avoid certain exposures even if we are not thinking about the particular hazard.

If we are always alert, never let our attention wander, and remember to use all the safe practices and equipment required for a particular task, then habits are not necessary. Circumstances arise for various reasons and complete attention is not always possible. However, under these circumstances, safe work habits really pay off. Some of the potential hazards and the safety habits that may protect you from being injured include the following.

HAZARD:
The possibility of getting into the path of a moving object as it moves toward a stationary object.

SAFETY HABITS:
Check to make sure that the machine openings are guarded. Look for cross-overs or cross-unders and use them when they are needed. Pay attention to warning signals; there is a reason for such devices.

HAZARD:
Catch points/shear points. These objects have sharp corners, splines, teeth or other rough shapes capable of catching the operator or work clothing. Examples: Rotating drills, reamers, spline shafts, broaches, keys and keyways, nails on the inside of kegs and packing crates, shears and dies.

SAFETY HABITS:
Wear proper clothing. Make sure guards are in place, and used. Remove nails and staples from kegs and packing crates.

HAZARD:
Squeeze points. These are created by two objects; one or both of which is in motion as they move toward one another. Examples: Machine tables at extreme traverse position forming squeeze points with other machines, walls and building columns. Materials being moved on power conveyors create squeeze points with fixed objects along the conveyor.

SAFETY HABITS:
Maintain a minimum clearance of 18 inches between moving and fixed objects. Relocate equipment where necessary. Maintain proper guarding. Maintain sweep bars equipped with shutoff switches in the squeeze area.

HAZARD:
Run-in points. Examples: Belts and sheaves, chains and sprockets, gears in mesh, rolls, conveyor chains, ropes and pulleys, cable and drums.

SAFETY HABITS:
Maintain and use proper guarding. Know your equipment. Never operate or work close to unfamiliar equipment.

Building safe habits is like turning on an autopilot in your body; you function with less mental stress in your thinking capacity.

Make safety a habit when you recognize any of these hazards. Don't be caught in, on, or between. Apply these safety measures or some measures of your own. *Good habits are safe habits!*

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The Benefits of Stretching

Stretching before your work shift has many benefits. Organizations that implement a stretch and flex program see a reduction in the frequency and severity of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

Proper stretching increases flexibility, thereby minimizing the chances of pulling or tearing a muscle. Increased flexibility benefits your agility and balance, and has been proven to reduce related MSDs. The following is a list of stretching exercises. Hold each stretch for 10 seconds, and be sure not to bounce.

Neck Rotation

Turn your head to the side, stretching your chin toward your shoulder. Turn your head back to the center and repeat on the other side.

Shoulder Stretch

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Raise one arm overhead and stretch as far as you can without bending your torso. Repeat with the opposite arm.

Forearm Stretch

Extend your right arm straight out in front of you, palm downward. With the left hand, grasp the fingers of the right hand and pull back gently, stretching the wrist and forearm. Repeat with the left arm.

Triceps Stretch

Raise one arm straight up in the air. Bend at the elbow and let your hand fall to the back of your neck. With the other arm, reach behind your head and place your hand on top of the bent elbow. Gently pull down and back on the elbow. Repeat with the other arm.

Torso Twist

Stand at arm's-length from the wall, with the wall at your side. Reach one arm out and place your hand on the wall. Reach the other arm around the body, stretching the hand to the wall. Repeat on the opposite side.

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Back Stretch

Lie on your back and bring one knee to your chest. Hold the knee with both hands and gently pull in. Alternate knees and repeat.

Lower Back Reach

Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Reach forward toward your toes, keeping your chin up and lower back slightly arched. Try not to round the back or tuck the chin in—this decreases the effectiveness.

Hamstring Stretch

Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart and the left leg slightly in front of the right. Shift your weight to the back leg (the right) and bend the knee, turning the knee and toes to the right. Extend the left leg and place the heel on the floor, toes in the air. Keep the back straight and bend forward at the hips until you feel the stretch in the hamstring of the left leg. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Standing Calf Stretch

Stand with your feet together. Extend one leg in front of you and place the heel on the floor, toes in the air. Keeping the back straight, bend forward at the hips until you feel the stretch in the calf. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Standing Quad Stretch

Front a standing position, reach back and grasp your right ankle with your right hand. Pull your foot toward your buttocks. Place your other hand on a wall or chair if you need balance support. Repeat with the left leg.

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Proper Stretching

Stretching before your shift has many benefits. Companies that implement a stretch and flex program see a reduction in the frequency and severity of strain injuries involving the muscle(s). Proper stretching increases flexibility thereby, minimizing the chances of pulling or tearing a muscle. Increased flexibility benefits your agility and balance and has been proven to reduce the more common strains. The following is a list of stretching exercises. Hold each stretch for 10 seconds and be sure not to bounce.

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Stand with your feet together. Extend one leg in front of you and place the heel on the floor, toes in the air. Keeping the back straight, bend forward at the hips until you feel the stretch in the calf. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Standing Quad Stretch

From a standing position, reach back and grasp your right ankle with your right hand. Pull your foot toward your buttocks. Place your other hand on a wall or chair if you need balance support. Repeat with the left leg.

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MICRO-BREAK STRETCHES

Gently pull your head to the side to stretch the neck muscles. Hold a few seconds, then do the same on the other side.

Extend arm and raise hand up. Grasp the thumb with opposite hand and slowly pull thumb back. Hold and repeat for the other hand.

Extend one arm straight ahead and raise your hand. Gently pull back on your fingers with the other hand, but don't go too far. Hold, then face the hand down and gently pull back on the hand. Hold for a few seconds, then repeat for the other arm/hand.

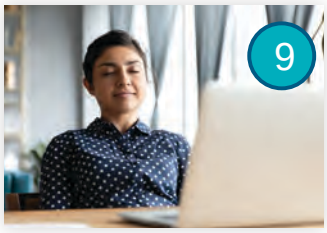
Extend both arms in front of you and make fists. Hold them for a few seconds. Then open your fingers, stretch them wide and hold for a few seconds. Repeat a few times.

Reach for the sky! Extend arms straight above you; open up hands and fingers. Hold for a few seconds.

Grasp your left shoulder with your right hand. With the left hand, grasp the right elbow and gently push back. Hold for a few seconds, then try the other arm.

Stand up! Place hands on the back of your hips; gently lean backward to stretch your spine and trunk. Hold, then repeat.

Roll your shoulders, gently making circles with them. Keep your arms hanging freely by your sides. Roll in both directions.



Remember, your eyes are a muscle too. Give them a break! Focus on an object about 20 feet away, or simply close them for a few seconds.

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Ergonomic Workstation Checklist

Comfort Tips

Head and Neck

- Top of screen should be at eye level.
- Documents should be next to screen.
- Primary task should be placed in front.
- Remove "stuff" under workstation.

Back and Legs

- Sit with back in chair.
- Chair height should facilitate 90° angles at hip and knee.
- Readjust screen height.
- Consider using lumbar support.
- Support position should be at belt level.

Legs and Shoulders

- Feet should be supported.
- Keep elbows close to sides.

Hands and Fingers

- Adjust chair/keyboard.
- Keep arms parallel to floor.
- Rest supports should have soft edges.
- Use light touch with keystrokes.
- Rest, stretch and relax muscles.

The Eyes

- Eliminate high-contrast situations.
- Eliminate glare.
- Change focal distance.
- Practice good eye care.

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Video Display Terminal (VDT) Comfort Checklist

Chair Height

- Knees should be slightly at or above the hips.
- Adjust chair height.

Arm Position

- Keep arms parallel to the floor.
- Adjust chair and keyboard height.

Posture

- Distribute weight.
- Sit back in chair and maintain lumbar curve.
- Create lumbar support.
- Adjust support to belt height.

Feet

- Keep entire sole of foot on floor or footrest
- Make sure you have clearance for legs.
- Remove "stuff" under workstation.

Screen Height

- Top of screen should be at or slightly below eye level.
- Adjust screen height.
- Reposition CPU (if too high).

Screen Position

- Primary task should be directly in front.
- Position correctly.

Documents

- Use document holder to keep documents even with the screen.
- Position correctly.

Key Points

- Top of screen at eye level
- Sitting position with back in chair
- Chair height at 90° angles at hip and knee
- Documents next to screen
- Lower Arm Parallel to the Floor
- Feet supported

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Office Workstation Ergonomics FAQs

Q: Why should I use a wrist rest?

A: When positioned correctly, a wrist rest is for the heel of the hand. It helps encourage a neutral wrist position where the forearms, wrists and hands are in a relatively straight line. Most experts recommend keying or typing with the wrists elevated off the rest and resting the heel of the hand on the rest during pauses. If they don't have a wrist rest, people often rest their wrists on a sharp desk edge or on the hard edge of a keyboard tray. This can actually create pressure points that aggravate hand and wrist problems.

Q: Do I need to sit in the same perfect posture all day?

A: No. You should try to vary your activities and position during the day to stimulate circulation and rest overworked muscles. Find a couple of low-risk positions that offer support and comfort and shift between them. If you plan to do a repetitive task such as work at your desk for an extended period, many experts feel that you should take frequent mini-breaks of a few minutes each hour. During these breaks you could do some filing, sort your mail, do some stretches, tidy up your office, or walk to the copier and make copies.

Q: What is the best way to organize my work station?

A: Keep the most frequently used items within easy arms reach, and on the side of your dominant hand. For instance, if you spend a lot of time on the phone and are right-handed, you should have your phone within easy arm's reach on the right side of your workstation. Avoid awkward reaching, bending or stretching to reach frequently used items.

Q: How do I know if I need a foot rest?

A: If your chair is adjusted to the proper height and your feet aren't flat on the floor, you should consider using a foot rest. Foot rests can also help individuals who have experienced problems with their lower backs keep positioned against the back rest of their chair. That way, the chair back instead of their lower back muscles, is providing the support they need.

Q: If my monitor is too high or too low according to the ergonomic guidelines, what can I do?

A: If you are the only one using your equipment, you can raise the monitor using telephone books, monitor blocks or reams of paper. If you share your equipment, you should consider using an articulated monitor arm that easily adjusts the monitor position to meet each person's requirements. People who need to lower their monitors typically have them sitting on top of their computers. Placing the monitor directly on the work surface usually solves the problem.

Q: If I work at a computer, how often should I have my eyes checked?

A: A minimum of once every two years. When you make an appointment with your eye care professionals, you should mention that you work at a computer and ask if they need any further information. They may want to know how much time you spend at the computer and how far your monitor is from your eyes. If you are a heavy computer user, they may offer you glasses that are optimized for computer work.

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Computer Work and Injuries

Computer work, whether it's for a job or for fun, may appear to be a low-effort activity when viewed from a total body perspective. However, maintaining postures or performing highly repetitive tasks for extended periods can lead to problems in localized areas of the body.

For example, using a mouse for a few minutes should not be a problem for most users, but performing this task for several uninterrupted hours can expose the small muscles and tendons of the hand to hundreds or even thousands of activations (repetitions). There may not be adequate time between activations for rest and recuperation, which can lead to localized fatigue, wear and tear, and injury.

Likewise, maintaining static postures such as viewing the monitor for a prolonged period of time without taking a break, can fatigue the muscles of the neck and shoulder that support the head.

Possible Solutions

Provide variation in tasks and workstations so there is time to recover from the effects of the activity. There are several ways to provide recovery time for overused muscles.

- Utilize an adjustable workstation so users can easily change their working postures. The use of easily adjustable furniture, for example, allows you to frequently change seated postures, which allows different muscle groups to provide support while others rest.
- Ensure that there is enough space to use each hand alternately to perform mouse tasks. This allows the tendons and muscles of the free hand to rest.

Substitute keystrokes for mousing tasks, such as Ctrl+S to save and Ctrl+P to print. If your job is highly mouse-intensive, high-repetition tasks or jobs that require long periods of static posture may require several short rest breaks. During these rest breaks, users should be encouraged to stand, stretch and move around. This provides rest and allows the muscles enough time to recover.

Alternate tasks whenever possible, mixing non-computer-related tasks into the workday. This encourages body movement and the use of different muscle groups.

Computer users should take the time to obtain general ergonomics awareness training on the following issues:

- Factors related to specific computer components that may increase discomfort or risk of injury
- Awareness of discomfort (signs and symptoms)
- How to correctly use and adjust components and environmental factors

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Office Workstation Ergonomics

Computers are an essential tool in nearly every office. Millions of people operate them throughout the workday. Unfortunately, for nearly 1 in 5 computer operators, the experience results in some type of pain.

We are now finding out that as the number of computer operators and workstations continues to increase, so do the number of injuries from their use. And computers are not only present in office settings. With the cost of technology becoming more affordable, nearly everyone has a computer at home as well. As a result, not only do we need to be concerned about computer hazards at work, but we must also be concerned about them at home.

The blame for most of these injuries can be placed on poor work habits and incorrect posture while seated at the workstation. Fortunately with a little bit of knowledge and effort, these problems are easy to correct.

Your Chair

Comfort at your workstation really begins at your chair. If you cannot sit comfortably in your chair, you cannot adjust the rest of your workstation. However, you need to know how to adjust your chair. There have been many instances in which complaints about a chair turn out to be due to the lack of knowledge about the adjustability of the chair. So here are some tips:

- ✓ Height adjustment: Most chairs should adjust in height.
- ✓ Seat pan adjustments: Some seat pans slide from front to back to adjust the gap between the back of the knees and the front of the seat pan. Some seat pans can also be adjusted for tilt to help keep thighs parallel to the ground.
- ✓ Seat back: Some seat backs have adjustable lumbar supports, either the entire seat back moves up and down, or the lumbar support moves up and down. Some seat backs can be adjusted for the amount of recline angle.
- ✓ Armrests: Some armrests can be adjusted up and down, can be rotated, and/or can be slid out or in to accommodate the width of the user. Remember, it's okay to remove armrests, if you do not like them!
- ✓ Tension adjustment: Some chairs have the ability to recline, but not to lock in place; such chairs often have a knob underneath the seat pan towards the front to adjust the tension – increasing the tension (turning the knob clockwise) "stiffens" the chair so that it does not easily recline. Warning, it often takes many (20-30) turns to obtain adequate tension.

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

- ✓ Base: There are generally 5-6 casters in the base of a chair to provide for stability. Anything less might allow a person to tip over in certain directions. Also, make sure your casters are rolling smoothly!

Beyond the Keyboard

Since ergonomics deals with the interaction between your body and (1) the tasks you do, (2) the equipment you use, and (3) the environment you work in, it literally relates to everything you do. Here are some tips for working more comfortably at your desk:

- ✓ Place frequently used items such as the telephone, staplers, paperclips and pens within the natural reach zone.
- ✓ The "strike zone" is your work zone – shoulders to knees.
- ✓ If your elbows are away from your body, something's wrong!
- ✓ Align documents to which you are referring while working on the computer directly in front of you to avoid twisting of the neck and hunching over – time for a document holder?
- ✓ Do NOT cradle the telephone handset between the neck and shoulders.
- ✓ DO hold the handset with your hand, or use a headset to avoid neck and shoulder strain.
- ✓ Keep the feet area underneath your desk free and clear.
- ✓ Avoid or minimize pinch grips.
- ✓ Place commonly used items on middle shelves and heavy items on lower shelves.
- ✓ Break-up repetitive copying and scanning tasks.
- ✓ Even if you're picking up a piece of paper, use good body mechanics!
- ✓ If you stand in one place for long periods of time, vary your foot position (use a footrest) to relieve strain on your back.
- ✓ Generally, it is better to push than to pull.

Ergonomic concepts apply 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, because it is all about your body! Apply ergonomic concepts to tasks at home too.

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Back Safety and Health Awareness

It is estimated that back strain injuries result in over 100 million lost work days each year. The direct and indirect costs of back injuries range from $25 to $65 billion. Back problems affect nearly 80% of all people at some time during their lives.

The side of these statistics that is often overlooked is the drastic effect back injuries can have on a person's lifestyle. Realistically we use our backs 24 hours a day, every time we lift, stand, walk, sit or even lie down. When the back is seriously injured, it not only changes what we do at work, but it can also seriously change our personal lives as well. Simple wear and tear can lead to a back problem, but the chances of having a serious injury increase greatly with poor posture, being overweight and using poor lifting techniques.

Not surprisingly, the chance for serious back injury is greater in jobs that require more strength and heavy lifting. Also, the more often a person lifts a maximum load, the greater their chances of incurring a lower back injury. The surprising news, however, is that a person's age, sex, body weight and stature are not always accurate indicators of strength. A person's past level of fitness is also not related to their present potential for injuring their back.

We all lift and move things every day. In many instances, it is not lifting a large, heavy object that triggers the serious injury. The potential for back injuries can be cumulative, meaning the result of small, perhaps unnoticeable injuries that have been inflicted on the back over many years.

Dangerous Tasks

The tasks that can contribute to back injury include:

- Heavy lifting
- Repetitive motions
- Bending, reaching or stretching
- Twisting or rotating the trunk
- Maintaining unnatural body position
- Infrequent rest periods
- Insecure footing
- Insufficient lighting
- Temperature extremes

The potential for back injuries can be prevented by redesigning or eliminating the task, using good body mechanics and practicing commonsense lifting.

Good Body Mechanics

Good body mechanics means using your body to do jobs and tasks in a way that keeps your back in balance. Following are several simple things you can do to keep your back in a balanced/neutral position.

Standing

For jobs that require long periods of standing, keep your spine in balance by placing one foot on a low stool. Raising one foot off the floor takes the pressure off your back and allows the back to assume a balanced position. Note: this is the same principle as the foot rail or small step in front of stand-up bars and tables in taverns and restaurants.

Twisting

Twisting your back should be avoided, even if you are not lifting or carrying anything. Twisting is the second most frequent movement associated with a back injury (whether sitting or standing) and is particularly hazardous when carrying a load. Move your feet (rather than twist your back) to keep the load in straight alignment with your spine.

Sitting

For jobs that require a great deal of sitting, choose a chair that supports your lower back or add support such as a pillow or rolled-up towel. The chair should be adjusted so that your knees are slightly above hip level. For driving, use a rolled-up towel for lower back support and adjust the seat so your knees are above hip level.

If your chair does not give adequate lower back support (such as a stool), lean forward and rest your upper body weight lightly on your arms and elbows.

Sleeping

Your back still needs support while sleeping. Try using a firm mattress and sleep on your side with your knees bent. If you must sleep on your back, put a pillow under your knees to relieve stress on your lower back.

Practicing Commonsense Lifting

Lifting a load safely is essentially a matter of common sense. Think about what you are going to do and the best way to do it.

Eliminate the task. If you do not have to move it, don't. If it must be moved, try to use available carts, dollies and other mechanical equipment that will eliminate the need for you to lift or carry the load.

Test the load, Before attempting to move the load, test it to make sure you can move it safely. Can the load be split in half? It may be easier and safer to make two, smaller trips than struggle with one large load. If the load cannot be split and you cannot move it safely by yourself, get help or use mechanical assistance, such as a hand truck, cart, dolly, etc. If you are using a cart, try to push rather than pull the load.

Plan the move. Look over the path you plan to travel with the load. Is it clear and unobstructed? Is the walking surface slippery? Is the lighting good? If it is a long distance, where can you stop to rest? A slip or fall while carrying even a small load could lead to a serious back injury. If you are moving the load with someone else, rehearse the lift so there are no mistakes.

Prepare. If you are stiff, cold, etc., prepare for the lift by doing some simple stretching. This is particularly important if you are not in relatively good physical condition or do not lift on a regular basis. Also, check the load for good handholds. If you lose your grip while lifting or carrying, it could pull your back out of balance.

Keep it close. When lifting, carrying or lowering, keep the load close to your body.

Don't jerk the load. When lifting or lowering, lift steadily with a balanced foot stance. Do not jerk the load, as this may pull your back out of balance. Try to use your stronger leg muscles to do the lifting. A steady lift is the best lift.

Be comfortable. Carry the load in the most comfortable and strongest position between your shoulder and knuckle height (the height your hands are from the floor when they are at your side).

Take it easy: If you must make repetitive lifts, take it easy, particularly if you are not used to this type of work. Repetitive lifting is closely associated with many back injuries. Take a break or perform other tasks to break up a series of repetitive lifts. If you have bad knees that prevent you from using your leg muscles, you might support the lift by using a chair or table as a brace. This allows you to use your arm strength to help you push off when you lift the load.

Conclusion

A serious back injury doesn't affect just you, it also affects your job, your leisure time and your relationship with those you care for. We owe it to ourselves and our families to do what we can to protect them and us from a potential tragedy. Back injury avoidance is simply a matter of taking the time to make sure you are capable of doing the task or lift. This means taking reasonable care of your back, using common sense and proper lifting techniques. The good news is that maintaining a healthy back is not as hard as you might think.

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Back Injury Indicators

Near-miss accidents, “close calls,” and the like are common occurrences in all phases of work or human activity. As they relate to manual material handling accidents, these “close calls” can take the form of Early Warning Indicators.

This article discusses these indicators as they apply to accidents involving back injuries. Although many “close calls” and early warning indicators go undetected, some will appear on first aid reports or verbal statements to co-workers or supervisors. A thorough reporting structure will enlarge this group of incidents, which increases its usefulness as an injury control tool. This structure can also lead to an “Early Warning Indicator Analysis,” similar to the technique just discussed. Such an endeavor can provide invaluable assistance to the prevention of both actual and potential injuries.

Back injuries usually are not serious and four out of five workers are back on the job within weeks. Some workers never suffer from back pain no matter what kind of work they do. Other workers, however, seem to suffer from it often, even if their work does not appear to be strenuous.

Back problems are part of a chronic disease process with recurrent spells, each usually becoming longer and more severe. A back problem consists of a series of painful episodes interspersed with periods of relative freedom from back pain. Reports of minor back pain are early warning signs of an aging back and should be taken seriously. It is an indication to the injured worker, the doctor, and the employer that the back is wearing out and that the lower back has been used improperly. The chances are high that this type of worker will re-injure his back again and again in the future.

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These early warning signs are giving you a chance to take action before a low back disability or chronic back problem develops. In order to prevent future bouts with back pain, change or adjustments must occur in the form of improved posture, body mechanics or task redesign. You should encourage workers to report all cases of back pain, and you should follow-up by making a thorough investigation.

The accident investigation process should be considered as a fact-finding mission. The purpose of which is to determine where and what type of change is warranted.

During an accident investigation, it is important to be alert for the following types of activities or conditions, which could result in a **Back Injury**:

1. **Frequent heavy lifting (greater than 40 lbs., 2 hrs/day).**
2. **Occasional very heavy lifting or force exertion (greater than 50 lbs.).**
3. **Awkward lifts or carries that are near the floor, above the shoulders or far in front of the body.**
4. **Exertion of forces in awkward positions to the side, overhead at extended reaches.**
5. **Sudden movements during manual handling.**
6. **Moderate to heavy effort sustained throughout the shift.**
7. **Lack of handling aids such as drum hoists, scissors tables.**
8. **Handling oversized objects.**

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Watch Your Back at Work

The statistics on back injuries and related workplace costs are a flood of negative numbers. Not surprisingly, the National Safety Council reports that the back is the body part most frequently affected by injuries in the workplace. "In 2003, the most recent year for which data is available, 303,750 back injuries occurred in the workplace…" Service occupations, transportation and materials moving occupations, and workers in production-related occupations lead in the number of back injuries. The impact of back injuries to both workers and employers includes a tremendous number of lost workdays and above-average workers' compensation costs. The silver lining, however, is that once identified, back injury exposures can be minimized with warmup stretching and proper lifting techniques.

Back-Breaking Factors

The National Safety Council also reports that in 2003, "73,950 back injury cases involved 31 days or more away from work. An additional 19,630 lost 21 to 30 workdays, and 35,660 lost 11 to 20 days." Alan Hosking, manager of the National Safety Council's Statistics Department, reports that the leading cause of back injuries is due to overexertion while lifting. "Of the 2003 injuries, about 241,850 were the result of sprains or strains, and more than 110,600 occurred during lifting."

Some of the tasks that can contribute to back injury include:

- Heavy lifting
- Repetitive motions
- Bending, reaching or stretching
- Twisting or rotating of the trunk
- Maintaining unnatural body position
- Infrequent rest periods
- Insecure footing
- Insufficient lighting
- Temperature extremes

Warm Up Before Beginning the Day

Warming up and stretching prior to beginning the workday are key prevention methods to keeping your back healthy. Muscles that are warmed up are less prone to injury and go a long way to preventing back-related injuries. The following tips on stretching are excerpted from the National Safety Council's Fact Sheet, "How to Lift and Carry Safely."

Leg and Back Warmup

1. Prop one foot on a chair or stool for support.
2. Take a deep breath.
3. Ease forward slowly—keep your back slightly curved.
4. Blow slowly outward as you ease forward to a seven count.
5. Repeat seven times.
6. Switch and do the same with the other foot.

Backbend

1. Stand with your feet about 12 inches apart.
2. Support the small of your back with your hands.
3. Hold your stomach in firmly and take a deep breath.
4. Arch backward—bend your head and neck as you go, blowing air slowly out for seven counts.
5. Repeat seven times.

Lift the Load Safely

Proper Lifting Techniques

1. Get in close to the load you are about to lift.
2. Spread your feet shoulder width apart to make yourself more stable.
3. Squat down to the load, bending your hips and knees.
4. Use the whole hand to achieve a full grasp of the load.
5. As you grasp the load, tuck in your chin, retract the shoulders and stick out your chest. This causes you to lock in the natural "S" curve in your lower back. Maintain this position, including the "S" or swayback curve of the lower back as you lift.

Additional Tips

- Before lifting, inspect the load for splinters, sharp edges, slippery surfaces or other hazards.
- Don't overreach to grasp, lift or lower a load.
- If you need to turn with a load, turn with your feet. Never twist your body or bend sideways.
- Don't work continuously in a bent-over position. Change stressful positions frequently.
- Be sure your pathway is clear before carrying an object.
- If you must lift/carry an object higher than your waist, then reposition your grip. Check your balance before lifting any higher or before carrying the load.
- Get help if the load is too heavy or contact your supervisor if you are having any lifting problems.
- Always remember to maintain the normal, inward "S" curve in your lower back whenever you lift.

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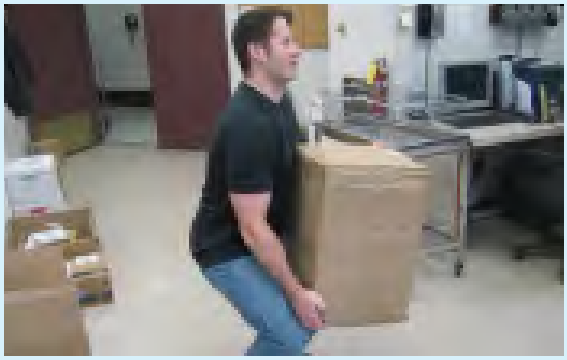
Proper Lifting Techniques

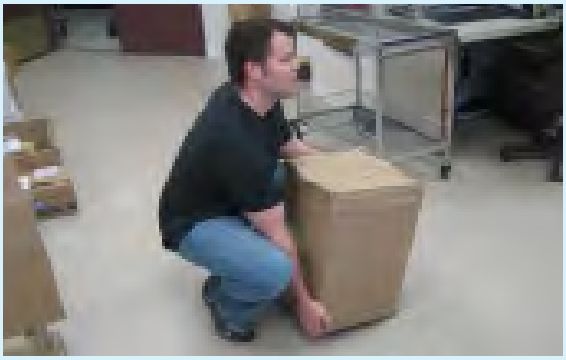
Using an improper lifting technique may not only cause painful injuries, but can also result in permanent damage to your body. Here are a few tips that may help alleviate the stress that lifting can impose on your back.

WHEN LIFTING A LOAD:

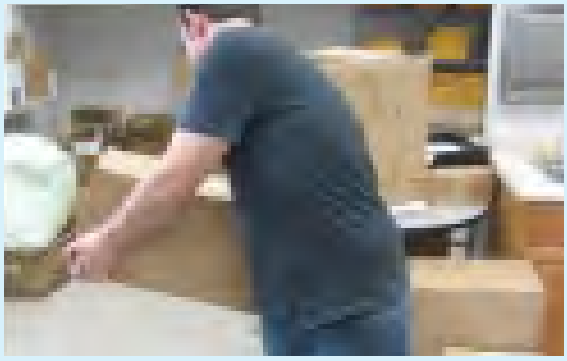
- To ensure proper stability, make sure your feet are placed shoulder-width apart.
- Keep your back straight and your knees bent.
- As you lift the object, keep it close to your body.
- Use the muscles of your legs to make the lift. These muscles are much stronger than the muscles in your back so it makes perfect sense to lift with your legs! Conversely, use your legs to lower the object when placing it below waist level.
- Don't over do it! If the object you are lifting is causing too much strain on your body, ask for help.



Keep the load close to your body when lifting.



Bend at your knees, not at your waist.



Avoid unnecessary twisting.

Team lift with someone who is equal in strength.

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10 Tips to Avoid Low Back Pain

1 EXERCISE AND POSTURE

Good posture and regular exercise help minimize chronic back conditions. Regular exercise is good but it is important not to strain your back. Regular exercises such as swimming, walking and cycling allow your muscles to function better. Remember, consult your doctor if you are at all worried about new forms of exercise.

2 ENVIRONMENT AND BACK INJURY

Avoid back injury by making your home and work environment as safe as possible. Attend to anything that can be tripped over, slipped on, fallen off easily, in order to minimize risks. Also, store items at a safe level.

3 IF YOU HAVE LONG-TERM BACK PAIN, OR A SPINAL DISORDER

You can still exercise, but it is important to consult your doctor or physiotherapist first. They will be able to provide guidance to fit your exercise needs.

4 BUILD UP MUSCULAR STRENGTH AND FLEXIBILITY

Your abdominal muscles and back muscles work together in order to give your spine support and strength. Strength and flexibility in your hips and thighs help towards maintaining good pelvic bone alignment.

5 AVOID PROLONGED STANDING

Try to avoid standing or bending down for long periods of time.

6 SEATING AND BACK PROBLEMS

Chairs should provide good back support. Use chairs that are at the right height. Straining to get on or off a chair, especially if you have to twist the spine into strange positions, can cause discomfort and injury. Ergonomically designed chairs are best.

7 GOOD BED MATTRESS FOR BACK PROBLEMS

It is important to get a mattress that provides enough back support. Get a medium-firm mattress rather than a very firm mattress. Use pillows to support the neck, but not to the extent they push your head or neck into odd angles.

8 LIFTING, LOAD CARRYING, AND YOUR BACK

Poor lifting and carrying techniques are the most common and most avoidable causes of back injury and pain. Never carry loads that are too heavy. Talk to your manager if you feel you are at risk. Make sure that when you do lift, you keep your back straight and bend at the knees to weight-bear. If you think you may have trouble lifting something get help. Don't risk incurring a back injury.

9 WEIGHT GAIN AND BACK PROBLEMS

Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight it puts a tremendous strain on the back muscles. Losing weight can make a dramatic difference to decreasing back pain and discomfort – it can also give you more energy.

10 SMOKING AND BACK PROBLEMS

Smoking causes diminished levels of oxygen to spinal tissues, which can hinder the healing process in the event of an injury.

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12 Steps to Minimize Material Handling Weight

1. Assign the job to two or more persons.
2. Distribute the load (contents) into two or more smaller containers.
3. Use hoists, cranes, conveyors, work carts and other types of material handling devices for transporting heavy and bulky components.
4. When conveyors are used, transfer of components between surfaces should not require any lifting by workers.
5. Change the job from lifting to lowering, from lowering to carrying, from carrying to pulling and from pulling to pushing.
6. Use handles, hooks or similar well-placed features to enable the worker to secure a firm grip on the container/material.
7. Reduce container weight by using lighter materials for construction and employing design methods that assure structural integrity without excessive container weight.
8. Reduce opportunities for workers to use their bodies to support components while being retrieved from shelves or placed in position. This can be accomplished by providing holding pins, positioning guides and tracks on which components can slide.
9. Balance contents of containers in order to produce equal reactive forces on the hands.
10. Change the shape of the container so the load can be handled close to the body.
11. Use large wheels on carts to minimize pushing/pulling forces. Use fixed casters and wheels for ease of handling and minimizing rolling assistance.
12. Treat work surfaces to allow easy movement of containers.

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8 Steps to Safe Sidewalks

Sidewalk liability is a growing issue as court cases have determined that the responsibility for safe walkways is the responsibility of the property owner. Many accidents occur on sidewalks due to structural problems such as uneven, cracked or broken surfaces.

When addressing sidewalk issues, consider the following eight steps:

1. Inspect Sidewalks Regularly
This is one of the most important actions you can take to protect your organization against sidewalk incidents and liability. Evaluations can be made in-house by the maintenance department or by your Gallagher Bassett Loss Control Consultant.

2. Determine the Root Cause of Sidewalk Problems
Examine each problem on an individual basis and address each repair with the appropriate strategy.

3. Select the Right Repair for the Job
There are three primary repair methods. These include concrete replacement, concrete raising, and concrete grinding.

4. Implement a Repair Plan that Fits Your Budget
Begin a documented repair plan and schedule sidewalk repair in phases to accommodate your budget. Scheduling repairs for a future date will meet the property owner's "duty of care" requirement.

5. Select the Right Vendors
Utilize the correct specialist for the repair. Be careful of hiring "jack of all trades" contractors. They will typically recommend a more expensive repair alternative since it is more profitable for them. Utilize a grinding specialist for grinding repairs, a raising specialist for raising repairs and a concrete contractor for replacement.

6. Re-inspect Sidewalks Regularly
Sidewalks continually shift and move due to ground settlement, tree roots and weather conditions. Conduct on-going inspections and document repair plans to provide protection in the event of a lawsuit.

7. Clearing Snow from Sidewalks
When using a snow thrower to clear snow from sidewalks, keep in mind the following: all snow throwers are potentially dangerous. Their large, exposed mechanism, which is designed to dig into the snow, is difficult to guard. However, with proper handling, snow throwers offer a service that is safer than the back breaking, heart-straining shoveling method. Safer snow throwers have guards on the drive chains, pulleys and belts. The guard should not be removed or altered in any way.

8. Avoiding Weather-related Slips and Falls
To avoid slips and falls related to weather conditions, use mats or rugs near doors to dry shoes.

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Slip, Trip and Fall Prevention

Did you know that the average person takes more than 18,000 steps per day? The simple task of walking also involves many different hazards and if you slip, trip, or fall, that can contribute to a painful injury. On an annual basis, it is estimated that between six and ten million incidents involving slips and falls occur, which represents 20 percent of all injuries. As you can tell from this message, injuries in the workplace have many different ways of happening. Preventing these injuries just requires some basic techniques that each of you can master every day.

How? Knowing the following hazards and taking time to not put yourself in harm's way will go far in avoiding these types of accidents.

HAZARDS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SLIP, TRIP AND FALL ACCIDENTS:

Weather
- Ice
- Snow
- Rain

Walking Surfaces
- Uneven
- Unfamiliar
- Slippery or wet

Elevated Walkways
- Stairs
- Ladders
- Scaffolds
- Catwalks

Illumination
- Poor lighting
- Glare
- Nighttime conditions

False Sense of Urgency
- Unsafe speed
- Taking short cuts
- Unfocused action

Specific Tasks
- Carrying or transferring objects
- Working near a water source

CHECKLIST FOR AVOIDING SLIP, TRIP AND FALL ACCIDENTS:

- ❑ Take short steps and slow down.
- ❑ Make wide turns at corners.
- ❑ Clean up or mark spills immediately.
- ❑ Take the pathway provided and be sure it is clear.
- ❑ Make sure you can see over the objects you are carrying.
- ❑ Turn on lights, replace burned out light bulbs.
- ❑ Keep work areas free and clear of clutter.
- ❑ Report loose carpeting on stair treads.
- ❑ Fasten throw rugs, mats and runners or use slip-resistant materials.
- ❑ Use appropriate climbing equipment—never use boxes, chairs or buckets as makeshift ladders.
- ❑ Follow the 4:1 rule when using a ladder. Never overreach while on a ladder.
- ❑ Designate a spotter at the base of the ladder whenever possible.
- ❑ When sitting, keep all chair legs on the floor at all times.
- ❑ Always use handrails on stairways, steps and entrances.
- ❑ Keep a close eye on snow and ice conditions. Clear walkways and stairs and apply salt often.

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Safety Awareness: Slip, Trip and Fall Exposures

Every year, 4,000 deaths result from slip, trip and fall accidents. There are between 6 million and 10 million slip, trip and fall injuries reported annually in the United States, which represent 20% of all injuries. The Bureau of National Statistics reports 1.6 deaths per 100,000 people from slip, trip and fall incidents. In addition, did you know that the average person takes more than 18,000 steps per day? Walking can be a very simple task but evidently contributes to pain, suffering, death and wasted dollars.

These statistics sound somewhat alarming; however, there are many common sense actions that can be taken to help prevent slip, trip and fall accidents in the workplace and at home.

A critical element of any safety program is communication. Communication is most beneficial when attempting to prevent slip, trip and fall accidents. Since most of these accidents occur during the simple task of walking, it is difficult to see the potential hazard. Constant reminders and proactive information can serve to focus employees on these possible hazards and provide tips for prevention.

Safety communication can take the form of posters, payroll stuffers, employee safety meetings or safety committee agenda items. Training programs can also include additional material that can be periodically reviewed by supervisors. The key is to be alert to possible hazards and correct those within your scope. Other hazards should be reported to a supervisor or documented on an inspection checklist for further action by management. In addition, there should always be follow-up activity to any reported hazard.

When addressing slip, trip and fall prevention, it is important to examine how and what is being done at work and at home. The basic safety guidelines to always try and follow include:

- Take short steps and slow down
- Point your feet slightly outward as you walk
- Make wide turns at corners
- Pay attention to walking surfaces and any changes
- Wear slip-resistant shoes when appropriate
- Clean up spills immediately or mark a spill
- Keep hands free and out of pockets for balance
- Go at a steady pace, and don't race down halls or around corners
- Keep soles of footwear clean
- Take provided pathways
- Make sure you can see over the load you are carrying
- Turn on lights, replace lightbulbs, and repair fixtures or cords
- Slow down when light is limited
- Keep areas clean and free of clutter
- Fix loose carpeting on stair treads
- Fasten throw rugs, mats or runners, or use slip-resistant materials
- Never use stairs for temporary storage
- Use the appropriate climbing equipment
- Keep arms and legs close to your center of balance
- Follow the 4:1 rule when using a ladder
- Have someone support the base of your ladder when possible
- Think about unusual situations before doing a job
- Always make sure you have the right equipment
- Ask for help when needed
- Use fall-resistant devices where appropriate
- Don't jump from tailgates or cabs of trucks
- Use a three-point step-off from vehicles
- Always close file cabinets
- Store personal items out of aisles and office areas
- Keep all chair legs on the floor at all times

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Food Service Safety: Fall Hazards

Recognize fall hazards in the kitchen:

- Food spills
- Wet floors
- Items placed on stairs
- Standing on a chair or table instead of a step stool or ladder
- Grease
- Dry spills such as sugar, flour, etc.

Floor safety rules—immediately:

- Pick up food
- Sweep up powders
- Wipe up grease or any other hazards

Ladder safety:

- Never use a chair or box as a ladder
- Select the proper ladder for the job, and never use a metal ladder for electric work
- Inspect the ladder prior to use, and never use a defective ladder
- Make sure the ladder is placed securely on a firm, flat surface and that the safety feet are in place
- Never stand on the top two rungs of the ladder or allow your belt buckle to go past the side rails
- Never place an object on top of the ladder

What can you do to prevent falls?

- Warn coworkers of hazards
- Barricade hazards until they can be removed
- Clean up all hazards
- Use proper footwear
- Make sure your path is clear
- Walk—don't rush
- Be aware of changing floor conditions throughout the day
- Inform your supervisor of any trip hazards

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Food Handling Tips

Food Safety Begins with Clean Hands

Hand washing is a must before handling any food product. Wash hands and forearms with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, rinse thoroughly, and dry with a disposable towel or mechanical hot air dryer.

Wash hands after:

- **C**oughing or sneezing, or using a tissue or handkerchief
- **L**eaving the garbage area
- **E**ngaging in any work
- **A**fter eating, drinking or smoking
- **N**ose touching
- **H**andling raw food like meat or poultry and prior to handling or preparing ready-to-eat food
- **A**fter using the restroom
- **N**ew tasks other than handling food
- **D**isposing mop water
- **S**craping or cleaning food or soil from equipment

Clean Kitchens

All food surfaces must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized.

- **Wash:** Wash dishes, utensils, cookware, cutting boards, appliances, equipment and cooking surfaces with hot soapy water to remove visible soil.
- **Rinse:** Thoroughly rinse off soap and film.
- **Sanitize:** Regular chlorine bleach diluted in water is an easy-to-use germ killer. Do not rinse again.
- **Drying:** Air dry only. Do not wipe.
- **Nonporous Surfaces** (tile, metal, and hard plastics): Use 1 tablespoon bleach per gallon of water. Leave wet for 2 minutes.
- **Porous Surfaces** (wood, rubber, and soft plastics): Use 3 tablespoons liquid bleach per gallon of water. Leave wet for 2 minutes. Rinse with fresh water and air dry.

There are four acceptable ways to thaw food safely:

1. In a refrigerator at 41°F (5°C) or lower.
2. Under running water at 70°F (21°C) or lower
3. In a microwave oven.
4. As part of the cooking process.

Food Safety Guidelines

Do: Keep hot foods hot (140° or higher) and cold foods cold (41° or below) at all times. Remember that milk and milk products, poultry, fish, shellfish, meat, and many salads and salad dressings are potentially hazardous food. If these foods are not handled properly and kept at safe temperatures, they will spoil very quickly and may cause someone to get sick.

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Do: Keep all foods covered or otherwise protected from contamination while being sorted, handled or prepared.

Do: Wash your hands thoroughly *before* beginning work, *before* handling potentially hazardous foods, and *after* using the toilet or performing any task which would result in soiled hands.

Do: Check your refrigerators frequently for cleanliness and proper temperature. The temperature should never get above 41°F.

Do: Wash thoroughly in clean water all fruits and vegetables intended to be eaten raw.

Do: Clean and sanitize, prior to use, all choppers, grinders, slicing machines, cutting blocks, knives, and any other surface which potentially hazardous foods contact.

Do: Wear suitable hair restraint to keep hair out of food.

Do: Keep storage rooms clean. They quickly collect dirt, insects and old clothes.

Do: Place all wet garbage and refuse containing food wastes in leak-proof containers with fly-tight covers.

Do: Keep shoes, handbags, and other personal items in the lockers or other facilities which have been provided for this purpose.

Don't: Thaw frozen food at room temperature. Thaw in the refrigerator, under cool, potable running water, or by cooking.

Don't: Allow hot foods to cool at room temperature prior to placing them in the refrigerator.

Don't: Use your hands to handle food when a utensil or other suitable equipment is available to use.

Don't: Line refrigerator shelves with newspaper, foil, or any other material. Air circulation in the refrigerator is essential to proper operation.

Don't: Allow unnecessary items and objects to accumulate. Throw away, or store elsewhere, all nonessential items which only make cleaning the kitchen storage areas more difficult.

Don't: Allow vegetables, fruits, or other containers of food to stand on the floors. Dampness or spillage will spoil the foods, and the presence of these materials on the floor hinders cleaning.

Don't: Let spatterings of grease collect on stoves, floors, or walls. Other dirt soon sticks to this and you have a mess which takes time and energy to remove.

Don't: Wash your hands in utensil-washing sinks or food preparation sinks.

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Food Service "Safety Recipes"

Cut Hazards

Know the hazards:

Sharp utensils, pointed objects, falling objects, broken glass, open cans, dull knives.

Fundamental ways to protect your hands:

- Maintain safe hand position, keep your fingers in clear view at all times.
- Pay constant attention, do not be preoccupied or distracted.
- Use hand utensils correctly.
- Follow safety directions, do the job properly, do not take shortcuts.
- Use cutting boards and sharp knives properly.
- Wear hand protection when needed.
- Keep work areas clean and free of clutter.
- Plan your moves.
- Keep all safety shields, guards, or attachments in place.

Machine Guard Hazards

Types of kitchen machines:

- Meat and vegetable slicers
- Meat grinders
- Meat saws
- Blenders
- Mixing machines
- Garbage disposals

Operation of a machine:

- Only once you have had training
- The approval of your supervisors
- Follow posted rules and proper operational guidelines
- Ensure all safety guards are in place
- Wear button jackets or tight cuffs
- No jewelry
- No loose garments or towels

Cleaning a machine:

- Turn machine off
- Unplug machine
- Let moving parts stop
- Perform cleaning
- Plug in power cord
- Turn on power switch

Burn Hazards

Protect yourself when you are using a boiling kettle:

- Lift back edge of lid first.
- Use a long handled tool for stirring.
- Use hand protection.
- Don't fill kettle to top.

When steam cleaning:

- Make sure that area is clear; barricade if necessary.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Do not leave hose unattended when pressure is on.
- Check that the electrical connections are waterproof.
- Return hose to rack when finished.

When working with deep fat fryer:

- Do not fill with fat higher than necessary.
- Always use basket to lower food into fat.

When lighting an oven:

- Ventilate the oven before lighting.
- Check pilot light before turning on gas.
- When turning gas on, stand away.

Miscellaneous things to watch out for:

- The handle of a pan on a stove that is sticking out into the aisle.
- Forgetting to turn the coffee urn spray arm over basket before turning on hot water.
- Use dry towels to carry hot pans instead of your apron.

Fall Hazards

Recognizing fall hazards within the kitchen:

- Food spills
- Wet floor
- Items on stairs
- Standing on chairs
- Grease
- Dry spills: sugar, flour, etc.

Things you can do to prevent falls:

- Warn coworkers.
- Barricade hazards until they can be removed.
- Clean up any hazards immediately when noticed.
- Use proper footwear.
- Make sure path is clean.
- Walk; don't rush.
- Inform supervisor about trip hazards.
- Beware of the changing floor conditions throughout the day.

Ladder safety:

- Never use a chair or box.
- Inspect and test the ladder.
- Place securely.
- Rest the object on top of the ladder or on a shelf when descending.

You can make your kitchen a safe place to work by developing safe habits, concentrating on your job, thinking of others, learning teamwork, and knowing how to use equipment safely.

Safety is everybody's job. The well-being of every employee depends upon proper safety attitudes, and everyone's willingness to cooperate!

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School Safety Best Practices—Classroom Storage

Classroom Storage

In the educational environment, what is successful with one class will likely be successful for the next. With this in mind, and in the face of challenging budgets, teachers are sometimes faced with difficult decisions about what to save, as well as how and where to store it.

While basic in nature, these questions can be difficult to answer, as the variables can be quite fluid. In general, items that are not used at any point during a complete school year should never be retained for the next.

Items that can be hazardous should be stored away from students and secured accordingly. For classrooms in the lower grades, this includes anything portable made of glass (like fishbowls), or anything sharp, flammable or electrical.

Items such as paper rolls should never be stored in open areas, as they present major fire hazards.

Tripping Hazards

Did you know that the leading cause of accidents in many school districts is slips and falls? Classrooms can be a haven for tripping hazards—if you allow them to be.

Items with power cords should have the cords secured so they do not traverse a walkway. These items could lead to the injury of students, teachers or visitors. Small items that are not easily discernible to the eye may present spatial complications and increase the likelihood of an accident; thus all small items should be removed from the ground.

Area rugs also present a fire hazard and should be stored when not being used during the school year.

Prolonged Storage

Open communication should take place between the principal and the teachers as to how to appropriately store items that are used occasionally during the school year.

Materials that are not used on a daily or weekly basis in the classroom should be secured out of the teaching area. When locked closets or storage rooms are available, this would be the preferred method. It is also important to note that locked storage rooms should be able to be opened from the inside, in case small students become caught inside.

Shelving

Storage units in the classroom should be carefully selected and age-appropriate. High racks or shelving should never be used in classrooms with small children, as they may encourage climbing. Many accidents have occurred when small students attempted to climb a shelving unit, only to have it fall over on them.

All storage racks or shelving units should be bolted to the wall, regardless of student age. This increases stability and minimizes the likelihood of a tip-over.

Relevant Materials

Always verify that the materials you are storing are actually materials you intend to use. Occasionally a teacher may hold on to an item for many years, only to realize at a later point that the item is no longer relevant for the student population they teach. While in storage, this item could have presented a fire or tripping hazard.

A perfect example of this is old encyclopedias. While nostalgic, these materials are extremely heavy and present the potential for back injury to those who have to lift them. They are also a fire hazard, as they are flammable. And, depending on how they are stored, they may be tripping hazards as well.

Perhaps worst of all, the materials referenced in an encyclopedia can become obsolete very quickly, thus the retained value in many cases is only for nostalgic purposes. Most information stored in an encyclopedia can be readily accessed on the internet, which negates any storage hazards otherwise associated.

Emergency Exits

Classroom materials should never hinder access to emergency exits. At least 36 inches of clear access to exits should be maintained at all times. Materials should not be stored in an exit route, even for “just a minute,” and doing so is in violation of the National Fire Protection Administration’s Life Safety Code. You never know when an emergency will occur, and the last thing you want to have to do is clear an exit route in case of an actual emergency or drill.

Fire Codes

Many cities and villages have relevant fire codes that dictate how many materials can be stored in the classroom. Check with your fire marshal and your regional office of education to ensure that you are in compliance with applicable codes.

Conclusion

Storing items in the classroom is an absolute necessity for almost all U.S. classrooms. However, storing materials appropriately and in avoidance of hazards can present a challenge for some teachers. Please take some time to check your classroom today and verify that the materials in the teaching area are items that are actually needed; appropriate for your students; and do not present a hazard to you, your students or guests who may be in the building.

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