



Safety News

ISSUE FOUR, 2006

S T A T E C O M P E N S A T I O N I N S U R A N C E F U N D

There's No Shortcut To Safety

Everyone takes a shortcut at one time or another. You cut through a yard, leap over a spill or skip a stair going up or down. But, every time you take a shortcut, you also take a chance at shortening your career or your life. Taking a hurried shortcut on the job can have serious – even deadly – consequences. If you're in the habit of taking shortcuts at work, break it. To your employer and your coworkers, safety is more important than speed.

Sometimes individuals work at a fast pace in order to impress "The Boss." While employers appreciate conscientious workers, you won't be admired if your hasty shortcut results in an injury. A shortcut or rushed job that results in an accident may not only cause the job to take longer it could also stop work completely.

Eliminate the need for shortcuts by allowing yourself enough time to do the job at a safe pace. Especially when starting a new job or using new or unfamiliar equipment, remember your safety training. Don't improvise to save time. Never bypass a guard on machinery, yank an electric cord from a wall or toss rather than hand an item

to a coworker. How many times have you read about the worker who injured his/her back because it was "quicker" to lift a heavy load rather than get help from another worker or mechanical aid? Or, how about the worker who fell off the chair he/she stood on to reach an item rather than take the time to look for the correct ladder or stepstool? Even if the job will only take a few minutes, it isn't worth risking your safety and health for those few minutes?

It's your responsibility to avoid dangerous shortcuts and to warn against anyone else you see taking them. Take the time to lockout and tagout, wear your personal protective equipment, and

use the correct tool for the job. Plan ahead. Give yourself plenty of time to walk or drive to that meeting or to the next job task. Finally, if your workload is more than you can safely manage, let your boss know.

Whatever you do at work – even if no one else is looking – avoid shortcuts; do the task the correct way, for your safety and the safety of your coworkers. □



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The Expert's Corner

Ergonomics Of Driving

While basic ergonomic features are standard in almost every car sold today, they have to be used properly in order for drivers to get the full benefits, especially if you have long commutes or drive for business. The following tips should help make driving more comfortable whether you drive for business or pleasure.

Stretch – Consider warming up and stretching before and after driving. It does not have to be any type of formal stretches. The main point is that it changes your position. If your drive is long, stop in a safe place every 1-2 hours for a quick stretch break. This will improve your circulation and flexibility.

Adjust Your Seat – Adjust the seat height as high as is comfortable to maximize road view. The seat back should provide support to the entire length of your back. Maintain the natural curves in your spine to reduce muscle fatigue and compression on the discs. If the seat back does not provide this, consider adding an insert or pillow. For longer rides, it is good to change positions every once in a while by tilting the angle



back slightly to reduce pressure on the low back. And, avoid slouching!

Adjust the seat distance to ensure that you do not have to extend your legs too far to reach the pedals. A seat that is too low can add excessive pressure to the upper thigh and a seat too long can add pressure to the space behind the knee.

Adjust Your Steering Wheel – Not only does this help prevent excessive reaching, but it is easier to keep your wrists straight. This promotes circulation and reduces fatigue. It is important to hold the steering wheel with both hands, not too tight, and on the

lower section of the steering wheel.

Avoid Leaning on Your Elbows – Leaning your elbows on the car door or center consol can put pressure on a sensitive nerve that passes through the elbow, which at the very least causes your hand to fall

asleep, but over time can cause an injury like nerve compression.

Learn Your Car's Adjustment – Failing to properly adjust the features on the car you are driving can lead to fatigue and long-term problems. Follow these tips to help make driving more comfortable, increase your circulation, and prevent musculo-skeletal injuries. □

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Electricians Working For C-10 Contractors Must Be Certified

If you are an electrician who performs work for a contractor licensed as a Class C-10 electrical contractor under the Contractors' State License Board Rules and Regulations you must take and pass a certification examination. Although the law establishing minimum standards for electricians was passed in 1999, the regulations became effective in 2002. Many electricians and C-10 contractors are still unaware of the certification requirement. ***If you work for a C-10 electrical contractor and are not certified, you may not***

perform work for which certification is required – regardless of the length of the project.

The three classifications required to take and pass a certification test are: General Electrician, Residential Electrician, and Fire/Life Safety Technician. If you are certified as a General Electrician you do not need a separate certification to work as a Residential or Fire/Life Safety Technician. However, if you are an out of state licensed

electrician, you still need to take and pass the certification test before you can work in California. Anyone who does not meet the eligibility requirements to sit for the certification test may register as an electrician trainee and may continue to work, but only under constant supervision of a certified electrician.

The certification requirement does not apply to workers who perform electrical connec-

Continued on next page

A Mat-ter Of Safety

There are two common reasons a mat is installed in a workplace – one is to prevent slips or falls and the other is for worker comfort. When choosing a workplace mat, safety should be a primary concern. The mat should be selected for a particular purpose, sized for the location, regularly maintained and cleaned, and correctly handled. If a mat is not used as it was designed, it could create more problems than the one it was intended to remedy.

Mats are often used in wet or slippery areas to prevent slip and fall incidents, but, if not properly installed or maintained they can be the *cause* of a slip or trip incident. Dog-eared, overlapping or sliding mats are other potential trip or fall hazards. When any of these conditions occur, they should be corrected or the mat should be replaced or removed.

Workers who stand on a hard, uncushioned surface for long periods of time can develop a variety of physical aches and pains including sore feet and

legs, back pain, and soreness in the neck and shoulder. A padded mat underfoot can minimize some of these discomforts. To maximize comfort and prevent unexpected movement, the mat should adequately fit the workspace and be stabilized on the flooring surface.

Workplace mats should be regularly cleaned to eliminate dirt or grease buildup. If grease or dirt accumulates on a mat it may become as slippery as the surface it's intended to safeguard. When cleaning rubberized or plastic mats, a detergent or degreaser should be used. Spraying the mats with hot water alone will not effectively eliminate grease and grime from their surface. Care should be taken when washing mats in areas where water could spray and create another hazards. Finally, proper lifting techniques should be used or help enlisted when moving heavy or wet mats to prevent a strain or sprain injury. □

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tions under 100-volt amperes or to sole owners who have a C-10 license in their own name. It also does not apply to electrical work in connection with the installation, operation or maintenance of temporary or portable electrical equipment performed by technicians in the theatrical, motion picture production, television, hotel, exhibition or trade show industries.



The computerized certification test is based on the National Electrical Code, NFPA 70, 1999 Edition and is available in English and Spanish. A valid state-issued photo identification or driver's license is required when you present

yourself at the test site. If you pass the test your Score Report will identify you as certified and your certification card, valid for three years, will be mailed to you within 2-4 weeks. If you do not pass the test you can take it again 60 days later. Residential electricians who miss the January 1, 2007 certification deadline should apply for testing as soon as possible.

For certification application forms, testing dates and locations, and for information on deadlines or extensions, visit www.dir.ca.gov and click on "Electrician Certification Deadline Update." □

Just For You

State Fund's prime concern is the safety and well being of our insured employers and their employees. We believe that a safe work environment not only increases worker productivity and morale but it also contributes to a lower cost of business operation.

Our experience shows that with informed planning and education the frequency and severity of workplace injuries and illnesses can be reduced or eliminated. To assist you, our insured, in your legally required loss control training and education programs, we produced this newsletter to address safety concerns particular to your industry. We know you will use this information to educate and encourage your employees to establish and maintain a safe working environment. We are confident that you will find the removable bilingual Safety Topic page especially useful for your employee training and documentation.

We encourage you to check this column in future issues for announcements of statewide State Fund produced safety seminar dates and to learn about new safety materials that can further assist you in your loss control and compliance efforts. For information on other loss control products and services, or to locate your nearest State Fund office, visit our website at www.scif.com. □



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News about Occupational Safety and Health in State Agencies

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Required Employer Responsibilities

California law requires that:

“Every employer... shall post and keep posted in a conspicuous location frequented by employees and where (it) may be easily read by employees during the hours of the workday, a notice which shall state the name of (the) current compensation insurance carrier...”

The notice must also contain information regarding employee rights and responsibilities and must *“...be posted in both English and Spanish where there are Spanish-speaking employees.”*

Additionally, the law requires employers to provide a form on which employees may indicate the name of their personal physician or personal chiropractor. The form must be provided to new hires either at the time the employee is hired or by the end of the first pay period.

If you would like free copies, in English or Spanish, of the required posting notice, the brochure explaining an employee’s workers’ compensation rights or the physician predesignation form, call State Fund’s toll-free customer service number at 1-877-405-4545. □

Check Out State Fund’s Loss Control “Safety Seminars” at www.scif.com

Reporting Work-Related Injuries

State Fund’s Claims Reporting Center (1-888-222-3211) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for policyholders to report injuries as soon as they occur. Agents will do the necessary paperwork to get the claim started and refer the injured to the designated physician or provider.

Within 8 hours of any serious illness or injury (requiring hospitalization over 24 hours, other than for medical observation or where there is permanent employee disfigurement) or death occurring in the workplace or in connection with employment, employers must report the incident to the Division of Occupational Safety and Health. □

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