



Safety News

ISSUE TWO, 2009

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

Assure Your Safety When Alone

Many workers find themselves alone in the workplace including those who work early or late hours and mobile workers that visit remote sites or provide services on the go. When you work alone, you must rely on yourself and your employer's established procedures for your safety.

With your employer, assess the hazards of the activities you will perform alone. Once the solitary or isolated work hazards have been identified, design safety solutions to control the risks.

Solutions may include tools or equipment (such as security cards, cameras, panic alarms, or extra lighting), personal protective equipment (PPE), or safety procedures for locking doors, handling cash, making choices for your personal safety, and communicating your location.

Always communicate where you will be while working alone. Notify someone of your intended location, service route, and work time estimates. Have a system for periodically checking in (by telephone landlines, cellular phones, radios, texting, or email) throughout your work shift or at the beginning and end. Choose the communication device appropriate to your work location and one that will work in that situation. For example, cement block walls, basements,

islands, peninsulas, and other remote locations may limit wireless communication.

Decide what emergency equipment (first aid kits, survival kits, etc.) and training (first aid and CPR) you may need. Know the nearest emergency centers like police and fire stations and hospitals.

Have emergency procedures for getting backup help or summoning emergency aid. Also, decide on "overdue worker" procedures or what your contact will do if you don't report in at agreed times.

If you use panic alarms in the workplace, test and conduct drills periodically to ensure that everyone knows the response procedures. Consider personal safety alarms that can act as a warning and/or summon help. Carefully evaluate the use of personal defense weapons and get training before you stock and/or use them.

Special circumstances may increase the risks of working alone. Night or early morning

hours can cause you to become fatigued and make mistakes, so maintain your overall health and fitness. Know your limits. Field conditions such as high crime areas, heat and cold stress, and exposure to animals and insects should be evaluated before you go to a job site. Get training in these hazards and carry the equipment, clothing, and supplies that you will need to handle them. □



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The Expert's Corner

Going Green With Office Lighting

In a standard office, lighting accounts for about 60% of a company's electrical costs. Despite recent efforts to make offices more energy efficient, surprisingly the majority are still overlit for computer work. According to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), about 30 foot candles (fc) of surrounding light for monitor viewing are all that is necessary for healthy computer use. Any more than this can create glare and reflections on the monitor screen, which can result in awkward postures and symptoms like headaches, nausea and fatigue in the user. Yet the typical office ranges from 60-100 fc, far more than is recommended, which results in a correspondingly larger consumption of energy as well.

Some simple steps companies can take to both make their lighting environment healthier for employees and to reduce their energy costs:

If your company hasn't done so already, replace all fluorescent fixture ballasts with

high-frequency electronic ballasts and full-spectrum T-8 tubes. This will substantially reduce your energy costs.

Better yet, replace those ballasts with a dimmable type, so that your entire system can be lowered down to the preferred 30 fc range with ease.



Maintaining a balanced overhead lighting system is important, so simply turning off some fixtures or removing certain tubes are not good options, as these can create hot spots or dark areas and electrical safety

hazards. Some systems are wired so that one wall switch controls the center tube in a three-tube fixture. If yours is set up this way, simply turning off this center tube can effectively reduce consumption by a third and result in an overall reduction in illumination of 20-30 fc.

Another simple energy saving technique in warmer weather is to close the blinds on the south and west facing sides of your building before leaving for the weekend. This will minimize the heat gain your HVAC system must overcome when the system comes back up to speed on Monday. □

Jeff Tiedeman, an Ergonomics Consultant with State Fund, is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP), and a Board-Certified Industrial Ergonomist (CIE). He has done extensive research on specialized topics related to ergonomics, including illumination in the workplace and seating design, and has written articles and spoken at conferences on these subjects.

Work Healthy In Hospitals

Hospital administrators, custodians, cooks, aides, nurses, and doctors may be exposed to communicable and bloodborne diseases, sharps punctures, chemicals, sprains and strains, stress, and workplace violence on the job. If you work in a hospital, learn about the hazards, get proper training, and follow all safety procedures. And, if you are exposed to a hazard, report it immediately.

Many hospital patients have transmittable

germs, toxic medications, or bloodborne pathogens. Before you begin a new hospital job – at minimum - get a medical screening, a Tuberculosis test, and a Hepatitis B vaccination. To protect against an unhealthy exposure, wash your hands frequently and keep them away from your face, nose, or eyes. Cover open wounds and wear protective clothing such as gloves, a uniform, lab coat, or smock, and shoe guards. Some jobs may require you to change clothes and shoes and shower before leaving work.

Practice good housekeeping by decontaminating surfaces and equipment after use. Employ universal precautions around patients to prevent exposure to bloodborne pathogens like HIV or Hepatitis B or C. Wear splash goggles or face shields to prevent blood or bodily fluid from entering your eyes, mouth, and nose or broken skin. Use safe work practices with soiled linens, wound dressings, or medical waste to prevent

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Heat Illness Guide Available To Employers

California employers with any outdoor place of employment must comply with the Heat Illness Prevention Standard to reduce the risk of work-related heat illnesses among their employees. To assist employers with compliance, Cal/OSHA has created a free guide, the *Employer Sample Procedures for Heat Illness Prevention*. To access a copy of this guide and for additional information on heat illness prevention, go to <http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/HeatIllnessInfo.html>

The guide offers suggestions that are essential to reducing the incidence of heat-related illnesses and are applicable to most outdoor work settings. In work situations or environments with a higher risk for heat illness, it's an employer's duty to exercise greater caution and include additional measures to protect their employees beyond what's listed in the guide.



The four main sections of the guide include but are not limited to those contained in Title 8 of the California Code of Regulation 3395. They are: provisions of water, access to shade, written procedures, and training. Each section has a reference to an

element of the Heat Illness Prevention Standard, offers sample bulleted procedures, and has lined pages where employers can insert specific steps they will take to assure compliance with that element of the standard.

The guide's recommended procedures are not meant to supersede or replace any other Title 8 regulation, particularly Title 8 CCR 3203, the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP). However, the guide's suggestions may be included in the

company's existing IIPP. Employers should also be aware of other standards that apply to heat illness prevention such as the requirement to provide for drinking water, first aid, and emergency response.

Employers are advised to carefully review the key elements and examples listed in this guide, then select and fill out the procedures as they

apply to their workplace. They should train their workers and supervisors on the company procedures that have been established and encourage workers to immediately report symptoms or signs of heat illness in themselves or in coworkers. □

Continued from previous page

accidental exposure. Double bag and dispose of medical waste properly. And, keep needles and sharps such as knives, blades, and razors in sturdy, puncture-resistant containers.

Properly use and store chemicals, cleaning or disinfecting solutions, sterilizing agents or solvents, and other materials in well-ventilated areas. Breathing concentrated fumes can harm the skin, mucous membranes, and respiratory system. And, only trained and authorized personnel should use anesthetic gases, chemotherapeutic or hormone drugs, and radiation equipment.

To optimize your physical and mental health keep fit, eat right, and get enough rest. Prevent sprain and

strain injuries by practicing proper ergonomics when lifting or moving patients and/or equipment. Ask for help or get a mechanical lifting device to aid you; vary tasks and wear comfortable supportive shoes.

Health care work can be rewarding but also stressful. Stress can accumulate from constant emergencies, administering to traumatic injuries, excessive workloads, or long hours. And, service to at-risk persons in stressful health crises can result in violence.

Stay healthy and safe by following proper procedures and attending training in customer service and handling behavioral crises. Know emergency procedures and alarm systems and practice response drills. □

June Is National Safety Month

Accidents and resulting injuries take their toll not only with the tragic price of human suffering but also with the monumental costs of economic capital in lost wages, productivity or property, and in increased medical, administrative, and insurance expenses. In an effort to raise awareness about how to stay healthy and safe both on- and off-the-job, the National Safety Council (NSC) has designated June as National Safety Month.

Each of the four weeks in June focuses on a specific safety topic, which includes some of our nation's most pressing safety risks, according to research.

The following link to NSC's website <http://www.nsc.org/NSM/> provides detailed information on each week's activities, along with posters and tip sheets for employers, designed to help develop employee safety recognition.

- **Week 1 – Teen Driving**
- **Week 2 – Falls** (in the workplace and at home)
- **Week 3 – Overexertion** (in the workplace and at home)
- **Week 4 – Distracted Driving** (primarily from cell phone talking and texting)

We hope employers will join with the National Safety Council for this National Safety Month and do their part to reduce the number of accidental injuries and deaths not only for the month of June but for all year...every year. □

Safety Topic

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Workplace Distractions

Work interruptions and distraction can result in performance errors, injuries, or lost productivity. Although there are some workplace distractions or interruptions that may be unavoidable, others can be controlled or regulated.

Avoid interrupting other workers during a critical job phase or process. When possible, refer to on-site instruction manuals and procedural guidebooks. If you must interrupt other workers, make them aware of your presence so that you don't startle them and cause an injury. Before responding to another worker, shut down or disengage the work tool, equipment, or processes.

Electronic devices such as cell phones, IPODS, and PDAs can be the source of serious distractions in some work environments. Check with your supervisor to find out if these devices are allowed where you work. If approved in your workplace, keep your cell phone on a low volume or silent when you work. To maximize work safety and performance, turn email notifications off and disable instant messaging.

For some workers wearing a headset with low volume music can be relaxing and help to focus on a task. However, wearing headphones in an industrial site can be dangerous if it prevents you from hearing warning signals, mobile equipment backup alarms, and safety instructions. Walking around while talking on the

phone or wearing a headset can distract your attention from safety and could result in a slip or fall or cause you to run into or be struck by something or someone.

Where loud or constant noise from tools and equipment is unavoidable, hearing protection devices can eliminate or decrease unwanted and distracting noise. In other work environments even not-so-loud sounds can be a distracting annoyance. Constantly ringing phones, conversations, and loud faxes, copiers, and printers can distract workers from their job tasks or – depending on the level or duration of the noise – can contribute to workplace stress. Don't answer the phone or emails when you're in the middle of a task – let it ring to voicemail then check messages later – preferably on your break time.



Workplace distractions and interruptions are common, but remember to keep your mind on the task at hand. Tell your supervisor about repeated and/or unsafe distractions and take responsibility for not interrupting or distracting others.

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By

Safety Recommendations



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How to Order State Fund Safety Materials and Audio Visuals

To order **safety materials** from State Fund's Safety Materials Catalog, State Contract Agencies must complete the *Safety & Health Services Materials Order Form* and include the listed catalog item number and quantity. Prior to shipping, all orders must be prepaid by check payable to State Compensation Insurance Fund and sent along with the order form to:

State Compensation Insurance Fund Safety and Health Services Dept. 1275 Market Street, Room 630 San Francisco, CA 94103 Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator	OR	State Compensation Insurance Fund Safety and Health Services Dept. P.O. Box 420807 San Francisco, CA 94120-7264 Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator
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To request a copy of the Safety Material Catalog or for questions about safety materials, contact the Safety and Health Services department at 415-975-2400 and ask for the Safety Materials Coordinator.

Audio videos are available to State Contract Agencies free of charge by State Fund. To request a video, Agencies must complete the *State Contract Audio Visual Request Form* and submit it directly to the Safety and Health Services Audio Visual Library. Videos are mailed at least one week prior to the viewing date and must be returned within seven days of the viewing date. Audio visuals must be returned in bubble-wrap, padded envelope or secure box to prevent damage. They must be shipped UPS Ground or by "PRIORITY" U.S. mail and be insured for \$400.00 each. The borrowing Agency

assumes responsibility for replacements costs for all lost videos and will be billed for replacement by State Fund.

All audio visual requests must include: the name of the requesting State Contract Agency Department; the name and phone number of the Agency contact person responsible; and the desired viewing date. No more than three audio visuals may be held by an Agency location at any one time. Additional requests for audio visuals will not be sent out until all outstanding videos have been returned. Agencies may mail audio visual requests to:

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Audiovisuals may also be requested by:

FAX – (415) 975-2444
Phone – (415)-975-2415
E-mail – avlibrary@scif.com

To request a free copy of the **Audio Visual Catalog**, contact the Safety and Health Services A/V Library as listed above. □

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