

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Three, 2009

Fatigue

Worker fatigue is a contributing factor in many serious on-the-job accidents and injuries.

The most important factor in preventing fatigue is to get adequate sleep and sufficient rest.

Fatigue can be mental or physical. It can impair concentration, alertness, judgment, and work performance. Although, fatigue is primarily the result of inadequate sleep or insufficient rest, other contributing factors include individual fitness; repeated or cumulative stress (mental burnout); environmental conditions such as heat, cold, vibration, or altitude; task endurance or monotony; and the time of day or night the activity takes place.

Because sleep deprivation is the primary cause for fatigue, make sure you've had adequate sleep and rest before you make critical decisions, drive vehicles, operate machinery, or manipulate controls. You should know that rest and sleep are not the same. While sleep restores the mind and body, resting only temporarily restores energy but doesn't have the lasting effects of adequate sleep.

Fatigue can affect reaction time, manual dexterity, and decision-making. It's

easy to be lulled to sleep by the hum of an engine, the warmth of a heater, the monotony of a continuous road, of staring at an instrument panel, and by dim lights or the dark of night. Stay alert and recognize early signs of fatigue such as a lapse in attention or not remembering the last ten miles or ten minutes. During



long periods of continuous work activity or when you notice that you're "glazing over" or feeling drowsy, take a quick break from what you're doing, pull off the road and take a nap, or ask a coworker to "take over" for a few minutes of rest.

At least once every two hours during an eight-hour shift or whenever feeling fatigued, try to vary your work activity, re-adjust positions, take a short break, walk around, take deep breaths, eat a light and healthy snack, talk to a coworker, or even sing or talk out loud to yourself. Since dehydration increases the effect of fatigue, drinking plenty of non-caffeinated liquids throughout your work shift is also recommended.

Stay alert to mental and physical fatigue on the job. Take action to prevent fatigue from interfering with your job performance and your safety.



TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By

Safety Recommendations





Safety News

News about Occupational Safety and Health in
State Contract Agencies

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

Loss Control Services

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Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in State Contract Agencies

Issue Three, 2009

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

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:

State Compensation Insurance Fund
Safety and Health Services A/V Library
1275 Market Street, Room 630
San Francisco, CA 94103
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

OR
State Compensation Insurance Fund
Safety and Health Services A/V Library
P.O. Box 420807
San Francisco, CA 94120-7264
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

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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REMEMBER TO RECYCLE
THIS NEWSLETTER



Safety News

ISSUE THREE, 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

The Aging Workforce

Today people are living longer and working beyond traditional retirement years.

Whether because of financial need, to avoid boredom or because they like their jobs, the trend toward an older workforce will continue. However, the natural process of aging – characterized by physical changes like diminished hearing, vision, muscle strength, balance, and reaction time – can affect job performance. With this knowledge, employers should take a proactive roll in adjusting workplace conditions to assure this valued segment of the workforce can continue to perform their jobs safely.

commands which could result in hazardous mistakes. Good housekeeping practices should be emphasized and non-skid flooring and handrails should be installed to prevent possible slips and falls. Workplace lighting can be upgraded to allow workers to see their job tasks and each other more clearly. And, noise levels can be monitored and tools or machinery with noise dampeners can be purchased.

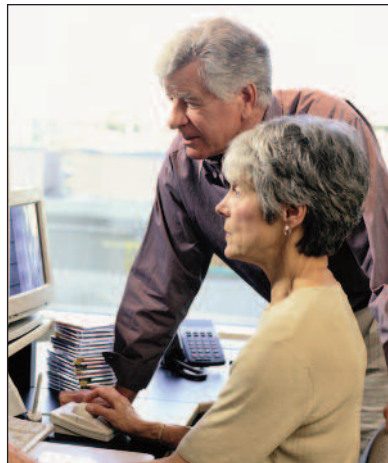
Employers can assess work tasks to determine the physical exertion required then assign tasks according to worker ability. Repetitive tasks such

as lifting, pulling, twisting, squatting, stooping or kneeling should be kept to a minimum for older workers. Mechanical lifting aids, reduced loads or task reassignment are safety alternatives. Employers should encourage older workers to perform tasks at the proper height and proximity to their bodies not above the shoulder on ladders or at excessive heights.

Workers can minimize the effects of aging by maintaining a healthy diet, exercise, and strength-training program to build muscle and bone mass. Older workers should know that heat and cold affects them more so they should be prepared with layers of clothing and close monitoring. And, if there are job tasks that they're unable to perform safely, they need to inform their supervisor. □

Older workers are generally more experienced, loyal, and reliable with lower absenteeism and turnover rates. Their maturity makes them good leaders and decision makers. Older workers tend to get injured less often because they're aware of the risks so compensate by following safety procedures and working with caution. But, when they are injured, older workers often require longer recovery times and have higher workers' comp costs.

Employers can maximize safety for all workers by implementing job hazard analysis, good ergonomics, and wellness programs. They should reevaluate their communication methods because it may be more difficult for older workers to hear safety



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STATE
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The Expert's Corner

Protecting Workers From Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Being in compliance with the Cal/OSHA (or Federal OSHA) noise regulations does not always prevent work-related hearing loss or a workers' compensation claim. That's because research indicates that the current regulations simply aren't protective enough.

Cal/OSHA's noise regulations have a permissible noise exposure level (PEL) of 90 dBA (decibels, A-weighted) for 8 hours. The regulations also set an "action level" of 85 dBA. When employees are exposed above this action level, the employer must implement a hearing conservation program that includes annual hearing tests to determine if employees have experienced a hearing loss.

There are two deficiencies with the current regulations that put employees at risk. First, the Cal/OSHA PEL and action level are not protective enough. Secondly, some industries (most notably construction and agriculture) are exempt from having a hearing conservation program. Without annual hearing tests, a worker may not notice (or bring to the attention of the employer) a hearing loss until it



becomes debilitating. Once hearing is lost, the damage is permanent.

There are guidelines for employers that protect employees from the damaging effects of occupational noise. One of these is the threshold limit value (TLV) set by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). Another is the recommended exposure limit (REL) set by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Both guidelines recommend an exposure limit of 85 dBA for an 8-hour workday.

Not only do ACGIH and NIOSH guidelines

lower the exposure limit to 85 dBA, they also lower what is called the "exchange rate" from 5 dBA to 3 dBA. When the sound level increases by the decibel value of the exchange rate, the allowed duration is halved. In other words, Cal/OSHA allows an employee to be exposed to 90 dBA for 8-hours, 100 dBA for 4-hours, etc., while ACGIH and NIOSH recommendations allow 85 dBA for 8-hours, 88 dBA for 4-hours, etc. That's quite a difference between what's allowable under the law and what's considered protective. In addition, NIOSH and ACGIH recommendations for annual hearing tests do not exempt any industries.

If you want to save workers from the debilitating effects of hearing loss, and prevent costly workers' compensation claims, protect your employees by following the ACGIH or NIOSH guidelines. □

Mary Jo Jensen CIH, CSP, is a Certified Industrial Hygienist assigned to State Fund's Sacramento and Redding Districts.

Fired Up About (Fire) Prevention

Everyone agrees that the best way to fight a fire is to keep it from happening in the first place. The likelihood of a fire or risk to people and property depends on a number of factors including the housekeeping standards; staff training in fire prevention and emergency procedures; the number and type of fire detection and/or suppression devices; and the number, location, and accessibility of exits. However, as with many safety hazards, if workers are aware of the causes, if they're prepared, and if they think before they act, the potential for fire and its dam-

aging effects can be minimized.

Following good housekeeping practices is crucial to fire prevention. Housekeeping procedures should include: keeping heating and electrical equipment clean, clear, and in good repair; regularly cleaning ducts and fume hood filters; keeping paper products, and aerosols or other flammable materials away from heating elements; and storing flammable liquids away from heat sources, exits or escape routes.

To avoid electrically caused fires, check,

replace or have professionally fixed any appliance with frayed or loose cords and wires or cords that get hot during use. Avoid running cords or wires under rugs and carpets or near a heat source where they can overheat; and keep them out of doorways where they can become worn.

Ensure that fire protection equipment (i.e., sprinklers, smoke/heat detectors, alarms, fire hoses, fire extinguishers, and fire blankets)

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Safety Rep Programs Get Results

If you want to have a successful safety program, get your workers involved. When workers feel the safety program is “their” program not just “your” program being imposed on them, they’ll be more committed to its success. One way you can get workers involved is by establishing a safety representative program.

A safety representative is someone from a department or work area who has specific duties relating to the safety of the work site and of the workers. The representatives’ role is not to take the safety responsibility away from supervisors but to support or assist them with routine safety activities. Whether this individual is elected or assigned, the majority of co-workers should agree with the choice to ensure their cooperation.

Sample duties of the safety representative could include conducting safety meetings or general work site inspections, making sure emergency exits remain clear, stocking first aid kits, and insuring that fire extinguishers are inspected as required. They could also oversee periodic emergency evacuation drills and communicate safety suggestions to management.

Training and support of the safety representatives is critical to the program’s success. You want to make sure that representatives receive training which reflects their duties and that they understand basic safety and health standards and regulations pertaining to your operation.

Continued from previous page

are maintained, available for use, and not impaired or concealed. Make sure all fire suppression equipment – including fire extinguishers – corresponds to the potential risk. Then train workers to know where the extinguishers are located and how to use them.

Train new employees and periodically retrain all employees in fire safety, emergency communication, and evacuation procedures. Post telephone numbers of emergency response personnel where

For the safety representative program to be successful, it must have management’s approval and backing. Management should try to integrate safety representatives in many areas of the company’s safety program. Include them in company-wide safety committees and encourage their comments about the safety of work areas. When you involve safety representatives in the decision-making process, you’re allowing workers to have input on meaningful safety policies and procedures. Management should also find opportunities to recognize and reward safety representatives for their workplace contributions and individual workers for their safety suggestions.

A successful safety representative program not only improves work site hazard recognition and control functions, but it also raises your overall workforce’s knowledge of safety and health issues. □



they can quickly be found. Make sure workers know the location of fire alarms and that they not hesitate to call the fire department, even if the fire seems minor and they manage to put it out before fire-fighters arrive. Fire fighters would rather arrive and find nothing to do than be called after it’s too late to save people or property. Let it be known that all workers are responsible for preventing fires, but not everyone is expected to fight major fires. Fire fighting is best handled by trained professionals. □

October is National Ergonomics Month

October has been designated *National Ergonomics Month (NEM)* by the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) with the goal of raising awareness about the principles and benefits of applied ergonomics. Simply put, ergonomics is the science of making tools, tasks, products, environments, and systems safer and more comfortable for human use. The October campaign strives to educate the public about how to make the changes that can improve their safety, performance, and comfort.

State Fund encourages its insureds to participate in NEM. To get you started, we have developed a comprehensive ergonomics educational CD-ROM, “Ergonomics: How May We Help You?” available free of charge to State Fund policyholders. The CD has everything you need to get your ergonomics program started and maintained:

- General information
- Tools to identify risk factors
- Training material
- Steps to develop a written program
- Cost benefits of an ergonomics program
- Effective medical management

To get your copy of the CD and find out what other safety information is available to you (such as ErgoMatters® and bilingual Safety Meeting Topics) visit www.scif.com or contact the Loss Control Department of your local State Fund office. □

Temas de Seguridad

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Número tres de 2009

Fatiga

La fatiga en el trabajador es un factor contribuyente en muchos accidentes y lesiones graves en el trabajo. El factor más importante en la prevención de la fatiga es dormir adecuadamente y descansar lo suficiente.

La fatiga puede ser mental o física. Ésta puede afectar la concentración, el estado de alerta, el buen juicio y el desempeño en el trabajo. No obstante que la fatiga es principalmente el resultado de no dormir adecuadamente o no descansar lo suficiente, entre otros factores contribuyentes se incluyen el estado físico de la persona, el estrés repetido o acumulativo (desgaste mental); las condiciones ambientales como el calor, el frío, la vibración o la altitud; la resistencia necesaria o la monotonía del trabajo, y la hora del día o de la noche en la que se realiza la actividad.



Debido a que la falta de dormir adecuadamente es la principal causa de la fatiga, asegúrese de haber dormido adecuadamente y de descansar lo suficiente antes de tomar decisiones críticas, conducir vehículos, operar maquinaria o manipular controles. Usted debe saber que descansar y dormir no son lo mismo. Mientras que dormir restaura la mente y el cuerpo, el descanso solamente restaura temporalmente la energía pero no tiene los efectos duraderos de dormir adecuadamente.

La fatiga puede afectar el tiempo de reacción, la destreza manual y la toma de decisiones. Es fácil ser inducido al sueño por el zumbido de un motor, por el calor de un calefactor, por la

monotonía de un camino prolongadamente recto, por mirar fijamente un tablero de instrumentos y por las luces tenues o la oscuridad de la noche. Permanezca alerta y reconozca los signos tempranos de la fatiga como la interrupción de la atención o no recordar las últimas diez millas o los últimos diez minutos.

Durante largos períodos de actividad de trabajo continua o cuando usted sienta que su mira-

da “se queda fija” o sienta somnolencia, tómese un descanso rápido de lo que está haciendo, sálgase del camino y dese una siesta, o solicite a un compañero de trabajo que se “encargue” de la actividad para lograr unos pocos minutos de descanso.

Al menos una vez cada dos horas durante un turno de ocho horas o cuando

se sienta fatigado, trate de variar su actividad de trabajo, cambie de posición, tómese un breve descanso, camine un poco, respire profundo, coma un bocadillo liviano y saludable, converse con un compañero de trabajo, o incluso cante o hable en voz alta consigo mismo. Dado que la deshidratación aumenta el efecto de la fatiga, se recomienda también beber abundantes líquidos sin cafeína durante todo el turno de trabajo.

Permanezca alerta para detectar la fatiga mental y física en el trabajo. Tome las acciones necesarias para impedir que la fatiga interfiera con su desempeño en el trabajo y con su seguridad. □

REVISIÓN DEL TEMA

Instructor _____

Fecha _____

Ubicación _____

Asistente(s) _____

Recomendaciones de seguridad

