



# Safety News

ISSUE ONE, 2007

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

## A Good Time For Housekeeping

**S**pring cleaning is not only a good idea it also makes good safety sense. However, to be truly effective, a cleaning or housekeeping program should not just be limited to the spring, it should be an integral part of a company's safety program on a daily basis, regardless of the seasons.

Companies that make good housekeeping a regular part of their operating procedures find that there are both immediate and long-term benefits including:

- **Lower accident rates** – Fewer injuries occur when work areas are kept clean and clear of clutter. A clean worksite minimizes tripping, slipping, bumping, being struck by, dropping, and caught between hazards.
- **Work areas are used to their best advantage** – Keeping floor space unobstructed, allows workers freedom of movement, smoother and faster traffic flow, and easier access to machinery and equipment.
- **Reduced fire hazards** – Poor housekeeping can cause fires, help spread them, impede the effort to put them out or prevent the safe exit from a fire.
- **Lower operating costs and increased production** – If the work area is straightened up and orderly, workers can do their jobs more efficiently and without unnecessary delays. Production runs smoothly if workers can quickly find and get to tools, parts, and materials.
- **Higher employee morale** – It's a fact that a clean

and orderly workplace lessens frustration, increases comfort, makes work more enjoyable, and improves employee attitudes.

Keep in mind that good housekeeping is more than a "push broom" effort. It must be well planned, scheduled into all operations, and consistently enforced.

Good housekeeping practices include:



- The orderly arrangement of small parts, tools, cords, hoses, and equipment
- Available trash containers with regular removal of scrap or debris
- Keeping aisles, walkways, platforms, and stairways clean, clear, and dry
- Neatly stored materials and supplies at a stable height, away from ledges and aisles
- The immediate cleanup of spills, oil or water
- The proper storage and disposal of oily rags or flammable liquids
- An easy access to well-labeled fire extinguishers, safety equipment, and emergency exits
- Adequate lighting
- Protected or well marked warnings on hazardous openings

Once good housekeeping procedures are in place, it takes less time and effort to keep them that way. For a good housekeeping program to be completely effective, management must be committed to the program and enforce it for all workers all the time. □

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## The Expert's Corner

# Hexavalent Chromium - New Cal/OSHA Regulations

**C**hromium has a variety of important industrial applications, from making steel “stainless” to providing a range of colors for pigments and dyes. But chromium has a dark side: in its hexavalent form, it is very toxic.

**Health effects** of hexavalent chromium, also known as chromium(VI) or Cr(VI), include lung cancer, asthma, nasal septum ulcerations and perforations, skin ulcerations, and allergic and contact dermatitis.

**The permissible exposure limit (PEL)** for all Cr(VI) compounds has been reduced to 5 micrograms per cubic meter of air. The already lower PEL for strontium chromate remains at 0.5 micrograms per cubic meter.

**Cal/OSHA has adopted additional regulations** to help protect workers from Cr(VI). These include provisions for exposure determination, engineering and work practice controls, respiratory protection, protective work clothing and equipment, hygiene areas and practices, housekeeping, medical surveillance, hazard communication, and record-keeping.

**The separate regulations** adopted for General Industry, Construction, and Ship Building, Repairing, and Breaking are identical for the most part, but there are some differences.

**There are a few exceptions** to the new regulations. Portland cement contains trace amounts of hexavalent chromium, but is exempt from new the regulations. The treatment of wood with Cr(VI) containing preservatives is also exempt, but the use of such wood is not.

**Is your chromium hexavalent?** Review the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) to find out. If it says chromate or dichromate, then it is hexavalent. Chromic trioxide, chromic acid, and chromyl chloride are also Cr(VI) compounds.

**Welding and cutting** on materials containing any form of chromium can produce hexavalent chromium fumes. You need to be concerned if your workers are welding or cutting stainless steel or other high-chrome alloys. Shielded metal arc welding (SMAW), commonly referred to as stick welding, generates a lot of fume, and much of the

chromium is converted to Cr(VI). Gas metal arc welding (GMAW), also known as MIG welding, generates a lot of fume too, but only a small percentage of the chromium is converted to Cr(VI). Tungsten arc welding (TIG) and submerged arc welding (SAW) generate lower levels of fume, so exposures to Cr(VI) are generally below the PEL.

**Other common processes** with workers at risk include chrome plating and spray coating with Cr(VI) containing materials.

**For the complete regulations**, go to the Cal/OSHA website. For a summary of the regulations, see our State Fund Loss Control Bulletin on hexavalent chromium.

**If you need help identifying** or controlling health hazards, request an industrial hygiene consultation through State Fund's Loss Control Department or your broker/agent.

*Beth Mohr, Ph.D., CIH, is a Certified Industrial Hygienist assigned to State Fund's San Francisco and San Jose Districts. □*

## Highlight Hygiene In The Workplace

**P**ersonal hygiene is not only important in the home, it's also important to the health and safety of people in the workplace. Good hygiene can prevent the spread of germs and disease, reduce exposures to chemicals or contaminants, and prevent skin conditions such as allergies, dermatitis and other infectious exposures.

The first rule of good hygiene is to avoid an exposure by covering or shielding the skin with personal protective equipment (PPE)

such as gloves, coveralls, and boots. Examine the PPE often for contamination, wear, tears, cuts or pinholes. Clean, decontaminate or replace protective equipment frequently to make sure it doesn't collect or absorb irritants. If protective equipment becomes too soiled during the job, stop work and replace it with clean equipment.

Basic hand washing and skin care can prevent work exposures and disease. Periodically washing and scrubbing the hands with water

and soap during the day helps to remove germs, contaminants, and chemicals. It can also prevent exposure by ingestion and cross-contamination or transferring the hazard to other surfaces and objects you or other workers may touch.

In some jobs, regular hand washing is required by law. Hand washing is important before and after using the restroom and

*Continued on next page*

## Put Your Best Foot Forward

The foot is something that doesn't get much attention unless there is a problem. Therefore, to avoid possible injury, it's important to think about safeguarding the foot before undertaking any job.

You may be exposed to various hazardous conditions on the job, including slippery surfaces, climbing hazards, handling or working around heavy equipment and machinery and working around electricity. These different working conditions may require different safety footwear to protect your foot from injury.

When choosing safety footwear, you must select the legally approved shoe or boot required for the job activity, equipment, and situation. Some situations may require metal-toed boots to protect the top part of the foot. These steel-toed shoes provide extra protection over the top of the foot and can make a difference in preventing an injury in an accident.

Safety shoes or boots with impact protection should be worn when you carry or handle materials such as

heavy packages, objects, parts or tools and for other activities where objects may fall onto your foot.

Wear safety shoes or boots with impact protection when your work involves wheeling carts that carry heavy materials; if you'll be handling heavy, bulky tools; working around heavy equipment or in situations where a heavy object may roll over your foot.

Safety shoes or boots with puncture protection should be required where you could step on sharp objects such as nails, wires, tacks, screws, large staples, scrap metal, etc. And special types of insulating shoes or conductive shoes may be necessary for certain types of electrical work.

Employers should instruct you in the correct safety footwear necessary for the work you may be required to perform or situation you may encounter on the job and you should understand the importance of wearing the protective footwear. Safety awareness and healthy workers comes from a total safety program that includes ongoing education and training in personal protective equipment on the job. □

## Safety Seminars - Sign Up Now!

State Fund continues to expand its popular statewide series of "Safety Seminars." The seminar programs are purposely developed to address key issues concerning today's California employer. They serve as a forum to disseminate information on current topics of concern to industries and on new rules and regulations that apply to business owners throughout the state. The program venues enable face-to-face interaction with speakers and regulatory agencies and provide attendees the opportunity to have their workplace safety questions immediately and personally answered.

The typically half-day seminars are held at regional State Fund offices or hotels and are normally free to insureds. Comments from previous attendees attest to the value of these seminars and worthwhile investment of time. Previous seminars have addressed:

- Confined Space in the Workplace
- Injury & Illness Prevention Programs
- Heat Illness Prevention Programs
- Safety in the Workplace

The statewide success of the seminar program not only underscores State Fund's mission to "assist employers in providing safe workplaces" it establishes productive working relationships with other California agencies. To find out what seminars are planned in your area, visit [www.scif.com](http://www.scif.com); click on *Seminars*. □

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before or after certain activities. Wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food and before you take a break to eat, drink or smoke. To control the spread of germs that can cause the flu or common cold, wash your hands whenever you cough, sneeze, or blow your noses, and whenever you're around someone that's sick.



twenty seconds. Then rinse with clean water and dry your hands with a disposable towel. To wash hands with a hand sanitizer, apply the appropriate amount of sanitizer into the palm of the hand, and then rub hands together until they are dry, being careful to cover all sur-

faces of the hands. For some job activities, hand sanitizers are not an acceptable means of hand cleaning. Showering and face washing after work is also a good idea. Personal hygiene and hand protection can help keep you healthy and productive on the job. □

Hand washing involves more than a quick rinse under a faucet. To wash hands properly, first wet them under the faucet and then use liquid or bar soap. Hands should be held out of the water until all skin surfaces are scrubbed and lathered for at least

# Safety Topic

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## Machine Guards

**T**he machine guard is the most valuable part of any equipment yet it's also one of the most ignored. If a machine has a part, function or process, which can cause injury, it needs a safe-guard. But in order for the guard to do its work, you must do your part in respecting and using the guards. If you remove or bypass a guard, it could result in a serious crushing or amputation injury or death.

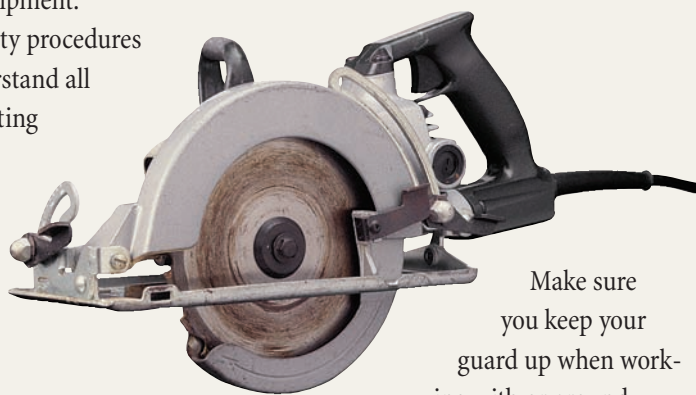
Before you use any machine, make sure you've been trained in its safe operation and know to keep your hands away from any moving parts. Only trained and authorized workers should be allowed to operate machinery. You should be instructed in the proper attire for working around machines including required personal protective equipment. Periodically review safety procedures to make sure you understand all training and safe operating practices.

Before beginning any work on a machine, check all its moving parts to make sure that guards are securely placed and that equipment is operating properly. Checking the guards should be part of your regular daily inspection. Missing or damaged guards should be reported to your supervisor-whether the equipment belongs in your work area or not.

Make sure you understand and follow lockout/tagout rules for use, mainte-

nance, and repair of machinery. Don't let a breakdown, jammed work or broken parts cause you to forget safety procedures. Power should be turned off and switches locked, blocked, and tagged during repair. When the repair has been completed, guards must be replaced and checked to be sure that they work properly.

Guards are installed on machinery to protect you and others from injury. This means that each and every time the machine is in operation, the guards must be in place. A guard must never be bypassed or removed during use. If a guard is removed for machine cleaning or repairing, it must be put back into place before reuse or storage.



Make sure you keep your guard up when working with or around machines by keeping your

hands away from moving parts and not tampering with them. Machine guards are really people guards. Let the machine guards do their job of protecting you on the job.

### TOPIC REVIEW

**Instructor** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Attended by**

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#### Safety Recommendations

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Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in State Contract 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.

State Contract Services provides the required postings and brochures for you to download from its website at [www.scif.com/StateContracts/Index](http://www.scif.com/StateContracts/Index). ☐

**Check Out State Fund’s Loss Control “Safety Seminars” at [www.scif.com](http://www.scif.com)**

## Reporting Work-Related Injuries

State Fund’s Contract Services Claims Reporting Center (1-866-794-2510) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for State Agencies 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. ☐

This State Contract Agencies Safety News is produced by the Safety and Health Services Department of State Fund to assist clients in their loss control efforts. Information or recommendations contained in this publication were obtained from sources believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is only advisory and does not presume to be exhaustive or inclusive of all workplace hazards or situations. Permission to reprint articles subject to approval by State Compensation Insurance Fund.

## Contact Your Nearest STATE CONTRACT OFFICE

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