



Safety News

ISSUE THREE, 2008

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

Safety Makes (Common) Sense

There are a number of safety problems common to most workplaces and job sites that can be solved with a little common sense.

Planning and thinking ahead can help eliminate most of these hazards. Take a close look at your workplace with these suggestions in mind.

Know the hazards that may exist in your workplace, then, follow all safety precautions to protect yourself against them. If you spot a hazard, correct it if it's safe to do

so or report it to your supervisor. If the job task requires it, use and properly care for the recommended personal protective equipment.

Be aware of and eliminate situations that could result in an accident or injury.

Practice good housekeeping procedures and keep walkways, stairways, and exits well lit and clear of debris. Watch where you're walking...around blind corners, on slippery surfaces, at heights, etc. and use mechanical aids or get help when lifting heavy loads. If work takes you on the road, follow all traffic laws and drive defensively. Avoid drugs and alcohol, which can impair safety performance and judgment.

Inspect tools, equipment, or vehicles before use to see that all parts are in proper working order. If

you detect a problem, remove it from access by others and report the defect to your supervisor.

If any part requires guarding, make sure guards are in place and follow all lockout/blockout procedures. Properly use, store, and/or dispose of sharps and cutting tools.

See that electric equipment and tools are grounded and away from water or other conductive sources. Use three-prong plugs, a ground-fault

system or double insulation. Periodically check electrical cords and wires for any damage. Keep electrical boxes clear for ready access.

Check that fire extinguishers are correct for your type of work, readily accessible, properly

charged, and regularly inspected. Make sure, too, that there's an adequately stocked first aid kit readily available and that you know what to do, whom to call or where to go in an emergency.

You have a responsibility to keep yourself and your coworkers safe on the job by following all safe work practices and avoiding dangerous shortcuts and horseplay. Stay safe by using your common sense. Your health and well-being on the job is important to you, your employer, and your family. □



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The Expert's Corner

Smoke From Wildfires And The Workplace

When smoke from wildfires is in the air, employers may wonder if the smoke is a health hazard and if they can do anything to protect their workers.

Smoke is a complex mixture of gases and fine particles. These fine particles are the primary health concern, but chemicals in the mixture can also contribute to the irritating effects of smoke. Carbon monoxide in the smoke is typically only a concern for firefighters close to the fire line.

Health effects depend upon the level of smoke and the sensitivity of the individual. They can include irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract, cough, phlegm, wheezing, difficulty in breathing, and chest discomfort. People with asthma, lung disease, or heart disease are more likely to be affected by smoke. If workers experience symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue, medical attention should be sought.

Employers should stay alert. They should listen to local news, weather forecasts, and air quality alerts. Air quality advisories and

news can also be found at www.airnow.gov.

Staying indoors is a common advisory. The heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system should be set to maximize the amount of recirculated air and minimize any fresh air being brought in. Portable room air cleaners can provide additional air



filtration. Some buildings are so “leaky” that the inside air is no better than the outside air. Other buildings may lack air conditioning and become too hot with all the windows and doors kept shut. If the inside environment is unacceptable, it may be appropriate for some or all employees to remain at home or at some alternate location.

Reducing physical activity may be recommended. Employers should review the level of physical exertion needed for all operations and limit or stop some activities if appropriate.

Air contaminants generated within the workplace can be a concern. If open doors and windows or mechanical ventilation with make-up air from outside are needed to reduce exposure to air contaminants from forklifts, welding, or other processes, it may be appropriate to limit or even stop some operations.

In general, the use of respirators or masks is not recommended for widespread use in areas affected by smoke. However, their use may be appropriate for some workers, such as those who need to be outdoors. Consult a safety and health professional before providing respirators for your employees. □

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TB Or Not TB?

Tuberculosis (TB), caused by the germ *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, is an air-borne communicable disease. While it can attack any part of the body, it's usually transmitted through the air when a person with active TB of the lungs or throat breathes, coughs, sneezes, spits or speaks. Then, anyone who inhales the contaminated air becomes at risk of contracting the disease. However, the likelihood of a person becoming infected has to do both the quantity of TB particles inhaled and the person's overall health.

With years of successful screening and treatment programs in the U.S., TB seemed a disease of the past. But because of the changing nature of our communities, e.g. an influx of immigrants from countries where TB is common, overcrowded living situations, individuals not accessing health care, and other at-risk populations (with AIDS or HIV), the disease has reoccurred in numbers of concern.

People with active TB are more likely to spread the disease to people they spend time with

every day, including family members, friends, and coworkers. In a work situation, the risk may be influenced by the job type (e.g., respiratory therapy) or site (e.g., prison medical unit) within a facility. While patients, inmates or clients with undiagnosed, active TB pose a primary risk to workers, according to the Institute of Medicine, the likelihood of occupational exposure to TB is closely linked to the risk of exposure in the surrounding community.

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Heat Illness Prevention Procedures

When temperatures and humidity rise, workers become at risk for heat-related illnesses, some of which can be fatal. In California, employers with any outdoor place of employment must comply with the Heat Illness Prevention Standard (the standard now affects indoor workers as well) to reduce the risk of work-related heat illnesses among their employees. To assist employers in crafting their heat illness prevention procedures, Cal/OSHA has created a guide, the *Employer Sample Procedures for Heat Illness Prevention*.

Procedures suggested in this guide provide the minimal steps applicable to most outdoor work settings that are essential to reducing the incidence of heat-related illnesses.

In working environments with a higher risk for heat illness (e.g., during a heat wave or other severe working or environmental conditions) it's the employer's duty to exercise greater caution and include additional protective measures beyond what's listed in the guide to protect their employees.

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 begins with a reference to the Heat Illness Prevention Standard then offers sample procedures. Following each section are lined pages where employers can insert the specific steps their company will take to assure compliance with that particular element of the standard.

Recommended procedures are not intended to replace any other Title 8 regulation, particularly Title 8 CCR 3203, the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP). However, the measures listed may be integrated into a 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. Train your employees on your procedures and encourage workers to immediately report symptoms or signs of heat illness in themselves or in coworkers.

For a copy of the *Employer Sample Procedures for Heat Illness Prevention* or for additional information on heat illness prevention, go to www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/HeatIllnessInfo.html □

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So, how can you protect yourself from contracting TB? Stay healthy, get plenty of rest, and see your doctor for regular checkups. A healthy person is less likely to contract TB if exposed than someone who has a weakened immune system or other health problem. Studies suggest that administrative controls, such as early identification/diagnosis, isolation, and complete TB treatment, are the best defenses against exposure. Engineering controls, such as good ventilation with fresh air and personal respiratory protection tailored to the level of a person's risk, are also helpful.

A TB skin test will show if a person has the disease. If an employee is diagnosed with TB, the supervisor should ensure that the employee does not return to work until cleared to do so by a health care professional/provider. If you work in hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing homes, hospices, correctional facilities, homeless shelters or similar workplaces or with the community at large, talk to your doctor or health care provider about possible TB exposure and treatment. People who contract TB can be treated and cured if they seek medical help. □

Don't Stand For Problems

Workers who stand for long periods of time can often experience muscle fatigue, low back pain, neck and shoulder stiffness and sore or swollen feet and legs. But, because some jobs require workers to maintain a standing posture, there are some ways to prevent or ease potentially negative physical conditions. Encourage workers to:

- Do some gentle stretching exercises before beginning work to warm and loosen muscles
- Face the work area and keep the task close to the body
- Organize work so it's within easy reach; avoid extreme bending, stretching and twisting
- Adjust the height of the work area; elbow height is most comfortable
- Stand on rubber, cork or wooden surfaces rather than on concrete or metal floors
- Use a footrest or footrail to shift body weight from one leg to another to take pressure off the lower back
- Change working positions periodically
- Relax shoulder and arm muscles when they become tense or stiff

It's important for workers to use their rest periods to relax or exercise other muscles. And, when returning to work after a vacation or illness, workers should give their body a change to readjust to the standing activities their job requires. □

Safety Topic

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State Compensation Insurance Fund

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Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorder

During the day your hands grip and release, twist and bend, push and pull. If you repeat the same motions over and over, your muscles get tense and tired and could be injured. Early damage may be so slight that it heals with rest, often overnight. But when your muscles can't rest long enough to heal, you could end up with a painful "work-related musculoskeletal disorder" or WMSDs. Three factors affect WMSDs – position, force, and repetition. If you adjust these factors as you work, you can prevent a WMSD injury.



Any extreme position puts pressure on muscles, tendons, and nerves. Even "good positions" are harmful if they're held too long. You work safer and motions are stronger when your hands and wrist are in a straight (neutral) position. In this position, the muscles and tendons can move freely. Blood circulates easily, feeding tissues and repairing minor damage.

Work within your reach. The best position is to stand or sit with the work process waist high so your hands, wrists, and forearms can move straight out from your body with your elbows kept in

close to your waist. Slanting the work surface toward you may bring tasks into easier reach.

Force is the pressure or strain put on muscles and tendons when you grip, push, pull or rotate. If tools are sharp and in good repair, they'll require less force to use. The size, texture or padding of a tool can also affect your grip and handling ease.

Contact force occurs when a body part is pressed against a hard surface – such as a handle, lever or worktable. Combine

force with a harmful position and the risk of muscle fatigue or injury increases. Use your whole hand or as much of your hand as possible when grasping a tool or object. This limits pressure caused by pinching. Hold the object near its center of gravity to balance the weight.

To avoid repetitive motions, vary your tasks or how you do them to give muscles a chance to rest. Reduce your chances of getting WMSDs by becoming aware of what you're doing, how you're doing it, and how long you're doing it. □

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations



STATE
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Loss Control Services

P.O. BOX 420807
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94142-0807



PRSR STD
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 740
ZIP CODE 92801

Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in State Contract Agencies

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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:

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
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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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