



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

Prepare For A Safe Harvest

Harvest is a busy time for agricultural operations. There are often more workers, more equipment, and a compressed time schedule to get things done that can increase the potential for accidents and injuries. Employers and workers can optimize safety during this period by inspecting the worksite, training employees, and maintaining equipment *before* harvest work begins.

Prepare for a safe harvest by conducting worksite inspections of maintenance sheds and fields. Identified hazards should be corrected or communicated to workers. Inspections also help identify worker training and personal protective equipment (PPE) needs that should be completed before harvest begins.

Training before harvest prepares workers to safely operate and maintain the equipment they use. Workers should be instructed on the specific hazards associated with their harvest machinery. Caught and crush (entanglement) injuries should be emphasized so that workers will take precautions to avoid them.

Workers also need training on the use and maintenance of the PPE necessary for harvest. Required PPE may include work boots, gloves, coveralls, hard hats, eye protection, hearing protection, and respiratory protection. To prepare workers for field safety, they need training on first aid, sun protection,

heat/cold stress, and the bugs or animals they may encounter. Ergonomic safety procedures should be emphasized to eliminate strains and sprains. Workers should get as much sleep as possible and avoid alcohol or stimulants that could impair judgment and reaction times.

To avoid entanglement, workers should secure hair and clothing, use proper lockout/blockout procedures, and never clean, maintain, adjust, or clear jams on equipment that is operating *or* powered. Workers should stay clear of discharge spouts, fans, conveyors, and other moving equipment parts to avoid projectile injuries. Workers should be instructed not to walk or stand between harvesting machines because the operator often has a limited line



of sight. Because harvest work often occurs in the dark before dawn and after sunset, additional lighting may be required to allow for the safe movement of workers and machinery.

Preparing equipment prior to harvest ensures that it is in good shape for the heavy workload. It should be inspected for proper guarding and all worn parts should be repaired or replaced. Keeping extra parts on hand during harvest allows quick equipment repairs so employees are less likely to “make do” with broken machinery. Harvesting equipment should NOT be used unless it is in proper working order. □

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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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Don't Underestimate Overexertion

Farming, ranching, and harvesting activities generally require a lot of physical exertion. And, although some physical exertion is good for the body, overexertion can result in injuries, physical fatigue, reduced work efficiency and a decrease in the speed and quality of your work. Preventing injuries due to overexertion is a lot easier than correcting them. By implementing simple work practices, you can prevent many overexertion injuries.

This is the time of year when farms and ranches can be particularly busy harvesting crops, handling heavy crates of produce or herding animals to market. This is when workers should be especially careful about what they're doing and how they're doing it and keep in mind the safe work procedures they've been taught to practice. Overexertion injuries are caused by tearing or stretching of tendons, ligaments or muscles when loads lifted, carried, pushed, pulled or otherwise handled exceed the

limits of the joint system doing the work. The most important way to prevent injuries from overexertion is to correctly handle a load using proper lifting techniques and take rest breaks when you become excessively tired.

Workers shouldn't try to move or lift an object they can't safely handle. When in doubt, they should break down the load into smaller parts. If they can't break a load down,

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The Gripping Dangers Of PTOs

Agricultural work often includes a variety of jobs using different kinds of equipment and machinery. Most jobs can be done safely, if workers are aware of possible hazards and are trained to do them safely. But, the risk of a severe injury increases when work must be done with or around machinery with shafts driven by power take-off (PTO) devices.

A PTO unit can be engaged whether the machinery is moving or standing still. Many entanglement injuries occur when the victim is off the equipment but working near the machinery. The most important safety rule is to disengage the PTO and turn off the equipment before leaving the operator's seat or approaching a driveline. If the PTO is engaged and the equipment ignition is left on during maintenance, inspection or other tasks, both the operator and anyone near the machinery are exposed to entanglement hazards.

If your workplace uses any PTO-driven machinery, follow these recommendations:

- Identify PTO-driven equipment components (such as drivelines, drive chains or gears) on all machinery.
- Maintain machine guarding according to the



manufacturer's most current specifications and OSHA regulations.

- Instruct workers and visitors who might come near an operating PTO unit about the entanglement hazard.
- Instruct all children and untrained adolescents never to approach, operate or perform maintenance on PTO-driven machinery.
- Loose-fitting clothing or jewelry should not be worn near operating equipment or machinery.
- Equipment operators should tie back or otherwise secure loose hair and should understand that even short or tied-back hair could get entangled in moving equipment.
- Examine PTO-driven machinery for U-shaped tunnel guards and replace them with retrofit guards recommended by the manufacturer or dealer.
- Wait until both the driveline and the machinery have completely stopped moving before performing maintenance or adjustments.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions whenever maintenance or adjustments are performed on PTO-driven machinery.

Injuries from PTO-driven machinery can be severe or deadly, so remember the hazards and take proper precautions to safeguard yourself and others. □

Continued from previous page

they should use mechanical assists such as a hand truck, lifting device, forklift or cart. But, they should ensure that hand trucks, wheel barrels or other moving equipment are in good operating condition. The work-saving device may put more strain on the body if it's overloaded or doesn't work properly. If the wheels on a cart are not aligned, they could strain the back, arms or shoulders when workers try to move it. When no mechanical assists are available, workers should ask for help from others.

Workers can protect themselves from overexertion strains, fatigue, and injury by taking care of their

body, eating well, and exercising, and getting proper rest. Workers should be encouraged to stretch before work activities and during the day to increase flexibility. If muscles or ligaments have weakened over time from lack of exercise or age, they're more susceptible to overexertion than if they're physically fit. Encourage workers to take periodic breaks when they feel the need to re-energize and give over-worked muscles a chance to recover.

Monitor workloads to ensure that workers are performing at optimum efficiency but with minimum risk for overexertion injuries. □

Fight Fraud With State Fund

Workers' compensation fraud not only affects your business it also impacts California's overall economy. That's why preventing and prosecuting workers' compensation fraud is a top priority at State Fund, one that is vigorously addressed by our Special Investigation Unit (SIU).

A team of specialized fraud investigators operates in each of State Fund's district offices and is supported by our Civil Litigation Unit. The State Fund SIU also maintains a strong working relationship with fraud prosecutors and law enforcement officials at local, state, and federal levels. This joint effort has resulted in arrests and convictions for all types of workers' compensation fraud including: premium, claims, and service-provider fraud.

To support our insureds in their fight against fraud, the SIU coordinates anti-fraud programs, produces video programs to help combat fraud, and conducts training for State Fund employees. The SIU also reports cases of suspected fraud to the California Department of Insurance's Fraud Division and district attorneys throughout the state so that these government agencies can investigate and prosecute fraudulent activities.

State Fund encourages each insured to join in the fight against fraud by calling your local State Fund office today and learning how you can fight fraud along with State Fund. □

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Three, 2008

Sun Protection

Many workers say that worrying about their skin doesn't rank very high on their list of priorities; but, outdoor workers are at great risk of developing skin cancer as a result of overexposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR).

Working around reflective or hot surfaces and equipment compounds the danger of overexposure to the sun.

The most dangerous time of the day is between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest. If you must be outdoors during these hours, follow these suggestions:

- **Use a sunscreen**, not just any kind, but one with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. The American Cancer Society recommends applying sunscreen to all body surfaces not covered with hair, a hat or clothing, about 20 minutes before going outside. If you perspire heavily or work around the water, use a waterproof sunscreen reapplied periodically.
- **Cover exposed areas.** Sweltering temperatures can lure you into unsafe sun behavior. Many workers complain, "It's too hot to wear pants and long-sleeved shirts," so they choose shorts, tank tops or go shirtless. The body of the less



dressed becomes a target for the burning sun. To help prevent burning, wear lightweight, tightly woven but opaque clothing.

A wide-brimmed safety hat should be worn to protect your head and face from direct sunlight. It should protect the ear tips, neck, temples, and lower face. A bandana worn around the neck provides further protection.

- **Wear sunglasses.** UVR damage to the eyes is often overlooked by outdoor workers, yet eyes are six times more sensitive than skin to ultraviolet radiation. Sunglasses or other protective eye-wear is a must. Ultraviolet light increases the risk of cataracts and photokeratitis (inflammation of the cornea). Make sure you wear sunglasses that

block out ultraviolet rays. This type of protection is particularly important if working around water.

Even on cloudy days, you are at risk of overexposure from the sun's ultraviolet rays. Clouds, wind or other weather conditions, and shiny or reflective surfaces like water or metal intensify the sun's ability to burn the skin. By paying attention to the day's sun forecast and taking the appropriate precautions, you can stay safe while working under the sun. □



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



PRST STD
US POSTAGE PAID
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ZIP CODE 92801

Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in Agriculture

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Employer Education Series

State Fund continues to promote community educational outreach by increasing the quantity and frequency of employer seminars. These seminars are produced and sponsored by State Fund and are open to State Fund policyholders. The seminar topics cover all aspects of worker's compensation and are offered statewide.

As part of State Fund's Employer Education Series, the local State Fund Loss Control departments offer safety seminars dedicated to loss prevention. They feature safety training targeted to specific industries and safety topics of interest to California employers. Various programs in the series are developed in conjunction with State Fund insured Group Programs and external affiliates and partners. Some of these partners are occupational safety and health providers such as Cal/OSHA Consultation Service, the Department of Health Services, and the University of California.

The goal of State Fund's Employer Education Series is to present valuable information from recognized safety and health experts to enable employers to reduce the frequency and severity of workplace injuries, facilitate regulatory compliance, and increase business profits.

The program venues provide the opportunity for attendees to have their workplace safety questions immediately and personally answered by industry experts. The typically half-day seminars are usually held at regional State Fund offices. To learn what programs are scheduled in your area, visit www.scif.com and click on Seminars. □

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. □

This Agricultural 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.

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