

Safety News

ISSUE TWO, 2008

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

Solutions For Injury Prevention

Construction work is physically demanding. Many daily activities require workers to lift heavy loads or do repetitive tasks. So, it's no wonder that injuries like strains, sprains, and work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) are so prevalent and are most likely to result in days away from work. To aid in the prevention of construction worker injuries, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) compiled a booklet, *Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Construction Workers*, that suggests simple and inexpensive ways to make construction work easier, more comfortable, and better suited to the needs of the human body.

Many injuries in construction result from jobs that push the human body beyond its natural limits. Workers who must lift, stoop, kneel, twist, grip, stretch, reach overhead or work in awkward positions to do a job are at risk of developing a WMSD such as back problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, rotator cuff tears, sprains, and strains. Because the safety and health of our construction-industry policyholders has always been a top priority for State Fund, we want to inform our insured construction workers, supervisors, contractors, safety specialists, human resources managers or anyone with an interest in construction safety about this new publication.

The 92-page booklet offers "simple solutions" for

jobs that involve: floor-to-ground and ground-level work; overhead work; lifting, holding or handling materials; and hand-intensive work. For each type of work, simple solutions for tasks are

described in a series of "Tip Sheets" with photos and illustrations. The solutions consist mostly of materials or equipment that can be used to do the job in an easier way. Each Tip Sheet describes a problem, one possible solution, its benefits to the worker and the employer, how much it

costs, and where it can be purchased. All the solutions are readily available and are already in use by construction companies.

The solutions suggested in the booklet are practical ideas to help reduce the risk of WMSDs in common construction tasks. And, while some solutions may need the involvement of the building owners or general contractors, there are many ideas that individual workers and foremen can adopt. State Fund encourages both contractors and workers to consider the "simple solutions" in this booklet and look for ways to adapt them to the job and worksite.

For a copy of the booklet, visit the NIOSH website at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2007-122/>

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In This Issue

Feature Articles

Solutions For Injury Prevention

The Expert's Corner –
Grip Force And Gloves

Check Out State Fund's
IIPP Builder

A Guide For Heat Illness
Prevention

Let's Review

Safety Topic –
Eye Protection

In Each Issue

Employer Education Series
Reporting Injuries

STATE
COMPENSATION
INSURANCE
FUND

The Expert's Corner

Grip Force And Gloves

People wear gloves for many different reasons and occasions. Whether people are making fashion statements, participating in their favorite pastime, or simply working, properly fitting gloves can be an important accessory for completing tasks comfortably, efficiently, and safely. Gloves improve grip when handling tools and slippery objects, and they protect the hands from extreme temperatures, sharp or abrasive materials, and guard against the effects of toxic and corrosive substances.

While gloves provide excellent protection against many hazards, they can be hazardous if they do not fit properly. When gloves are too loose, extra force needs to be applied in order to get a good firm grip. Because of this, there is a loss of grip strength, in comparison to not wearing any gloves at all. This, in effect, causes double work: performing the job at hand and overcoming any movement or slippage from the glove. On the other hand, when gloves are too tight, they interfere with grasping, dexterity, and finger movement. Additional force is needed in order to flex the tight

gloves, especially if they are thick.

Wearing ill-fitting gloves requires the wearer to apply additional grip force that would not be required if the gloves fit correctly. Over time, greater grip forces applied can lead to fatigue, discomfort, and eventual injury to the hands and arms.



The following points should be considered when selecting the right glove for the job:

- Gloves with rubber dots on the surface increase grip stability on surfaces that are slippery (e.g., wet items or items

without handles).

- For slippery surfaces, workers use greater grip force when wearing cotton gloves than with rubber gloves. Cotton gloves perform better with non-slippery surfaces.
- Rubber gloves allow employees to maintain relatively low grip force levels for both slippery and non-slippery surfaces.
- Studies by the University of Osaka suggest that rubber gloves help reduce force and provide more efficient control than cotton gloves in tasks requiring precision handling of small objects.
- Performance time for cotton gloves tends to be longer than that for rubber gloves.
- In addition to carefully selecting the type of glove provided to workers, gloves of different sizes should also be provided.

Information above refers to a research study conducted at the School of Health and Sport Sciences at the University of Osaka, Japan. □

Lou Vicario is one of State Fund's Certified Associate Ergonomists based in Southern California.

Check Out State Fund's Online IIPP Builder

Since 1991, the California Code of Regulations has required employers to establish, implement, and maintain an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) to ensure that all California employers meet their legal obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace for their employees.

An IIPP is a written plan that details the required steps employers must take to protect their employees from workplace hazards. If a

Cal/OSHA inspector visits a workplace, one of the first things he/she will ask is to see the company's IIPP. The benefits of having an effective IIPP include: reducing work-related injuries and illnesses, decreasing financial losses resulting from work-related injuries, and avoiding costly Cal/OSHA fines.

As a service to our policyholders, State Fund has developed an online tool called the IIPP Builder. This interactive tool enables you to create an Injury and Illness Prevention

Program specific to your business operation and allows you to download various forms and checklists to use when implementing your IIPP. The IIPP Builder contains tutorials that will guide you through the steps necessary to compose your customized safety program. The IIPP Builder will not only enable you to create and update your IIPP, it's also designed to help you understand IIPP requirements and to determine if your

Continued on next page

A Guide For Heat Illness Prevention

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 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. □

Continued from previous page

IIPP meets Cal/OSHA requirements.

The IIPP Builder – which requires either Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher or Adobe Acrobat 5.0 or higher – is available exclusively to our policyholders through State Fund Online (a free online resource tool that allows you to quickly and easily manage your policy round-the-clock). If you're not currently a State Fund Online user, register now at www.scif.com and begin building your IIPP today.

State Fund recognizes that an employer's loss control efforts help to decrease the frequency and severity of illnesses and injuries in the work environment. We are committed to the belief that a safe

workplace can increase productivity and lower workers' compensation costs and are proud of our role in helping you develop and enhance your safety programs.

For questions about the IIPP Builder, contact your State Fund Loss Control Consultant, call State Fund Online Support at 1-866-721-3498, or email us at iipp@scif.com. The IIPP Builder is just one of many products State Fund has developed to help you control costs as well as lower employee work-related injuries and illnesses. To find out about additional products and services available to State Fund policyholders, visit www.scif.com. □

Let's Review

Employers have a responsibility to train their workers to perform their jobs safely, efficiently, and productively in compliance with applicable safety standards and regulations. And, now is a good time to review that training. For some activities or hazard exposures, annual training is required. A good place to start is to review the company Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP).

An effective training program should inform workers of hazards to which they may be exposed in the course of their work and should cover the employers Code of Safe Practices. The program should also teach them how to reduce or eliminate inefficient or unsafe actions which could result in personal injury or damage to equipment and property.

Make sure workers understand the purpose of the training, why it will be useful to them, and what can result from not following safety rules and procedures. Don't assume because workers attended training and were nodding their heads that the hazards, safety rules or practices presented were understood. Expand your training methods so that it is understandable to all workers regardless of language or level of education.

Tailgate training meetings are required at least every 10 working days and thus provide a means to reinforce safety issues at the jobsite. And finally, remember to document all training and place it in the worker's personal file or in the company's training log. □

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

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Eye Protection

What would your life be like if you couldn't see? A moment without proper eye protection could cause you to lose the vision you may take for granted. Yet, a moment is all it takes to put on safety glasses, goggles, face shields or helmets to protect your eyesight.

Throughout the day, you may be exposed to many eye hazards. Learn to recognize an eye hazard then choose the proper Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) – approved equipment to protect against it. For optimum protection, use and care for the equipment as recommend.

Know basic first aid for eye injuries and/or whom to readily contact for help. For all eye injuries, get professional medical attention as soon as possible after taking initial first-aid measures. Common eye hazards include:

- Foreign particles such as dust, dirt, metal, wood chips, even an eyelash can cause eye damage. These get into the eye from the wind or activities like chipping, grinding, sawing, brushing hammering, or from power tools, equipment and machinery. Flush the object out with water. Never rub or try to remove objects embedded in the eye. This can cause further damage. Loosely bandage eyes to stop movement.
- Bumps and blows to the eyes can be helped if a cold compress is applied for 15 minutes to reduce pain and swelling.

- Cuts in or around the eyes should be loosely bandage to stop any eye movement until professionally attended. Don't rub, press or wash the cut; this can cause further damage.
- Chemical splashes from solvents, paints, hot liquids or other hazardous solutions can cause great damage. Go immediately to the nearest emergency shower or water source. Look directly into the stream of water. With fingers hold eyes open and flush eyes for at least 15 minutes.



- Light burns can be caused from exposure to welding, lasers or other radiant light. Their effect may not be felt until hours later when the eyes begin to feel gritty and become sensitive to light, then redness or swelling may occur. Keep eyes closed while awaiting medical attention.

If you see an eye hazard, take a moment to put on eye protection equipment.

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 Construction

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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 Construction 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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