

Safety News

ISSUE ONE, 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

A Dry Run For Drywall Safety

Construction drywall activities are not only physically demanding, they can also be dangerous. Drywall work is often done under deadline pressure due to the fact that other trades are waiting for its completion. No matter what the drywall activity or its location; worker safety should be the number one priority.

Workers must have the physical stamina to lift, cut, and maneuver heavy, awkward sheets of drywall and fix them in place. If workers are in good physical condition, use proper lifting techniques and assistive devices, and work in pairs, they will reduce their chance of injury and strain. Using seam taping and sanding tools with spring-assisted or powered systems can make overhead finishing work easier and more ergonomically safe. Completing work one task at a time (hanging, taping, finishing, etc.) may be efficient, but is harder on the body; completing one area at a time allows workers to rotate tasks and give muscles a break.

When drywalling is done at heights to install tall walls and ceilings, workers need to use extra caution to prevent falls. Ladders can be used, if the work can be done safely from them and all ladder safety rules are followed. However, lean-to or jack scaffolds, shore scaffolds, nailed brackets, loose tile, loose brick, loose blocks, and other unstable

objects such as stilts cannot be used as working platforms or for supports. Sturdy scaffolds or steps that are at least 20 inches wide provide safe, stable working platforms when installed and used correctly.



Whenever drywall activities create dust, safety glasses and respirators or dust masks should be used to protect workers' eyes and lungs. Such activities include sheetrock cutting where gypsum dust can be released

or when dry mixing joint compounds whose dust can become airborne. In the latter instance, pre-mixed compounds can reduce dust exposure. And, proper worksite ventilation can reduce the dust created when sanding finished joints.

Electrical safety should be considered when drywallers are fastening sheetrock to wall frames. Workers should use caution around interior wall wiring and ensure that electrical boxes have proper shielding to prevent screws and nails from penetrating them. Powered nailers, fasteners, and drills should be properly grounded and in good working order to reduce the risk of electric shock. Other tools, especially cutting tools, should be in good working order and used properly. □

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Tuberculosis – A Continuing Threat

Tuberculosis (TB) is a global epidemic. It's estimated that 2 billion people (or one third of the world's population) are infected with TB and every year, 2 million people die from it.

In the United States, TB control programs have kept the spread of the disease in check. However, the emergence of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR TB) make the goal of eliminating TB in the U.S. especially important.

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease caused by the organism *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It typically affects the lungs, but may also affect other parts of the body. TB is spread from person to person through the air. When a person with infectious TB disease coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, microscopic droplets containing *M. tuberculosis* may be expelled into the air. These droplets can remain suspended in the air for several hours. Another person inhaling these droplets may become infected with TB. The longer the exposure and the more contagious the diseased person, the more likely the exposed person will become infected.

Most people infected with TB will never develop TB disease – the body's immune system keeps the bacteria under control and inactive. A person infected with TB but who has not developed the disease has a condition called *latent TB infection* (LTBI).



Approximately 10% of people with LTBI will develop TB disease at some point in their lives. For people with weakened immune systems, however, the risk of developing TB disease can greatly increase.

A person with TB disease may have any of these symptoms:

- Persistent cough (3 weeks or longer)
- Bloody sputum
- Weight loss or loss of appetite
- Fever
- Night sweats

Diagnosis and treatment of TB is not only important for the health of the individual. It is also important for preventing the spread of TB within the community.

TB infection control programs should be established for clinics, hospitals, and settings in which home-based health care and emergency medical services are provided. Nursing homes, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, drug treatment centers, and other places that serve clients who are at risk for being infected with TB should also develop TB infection control programs. Information on such programs is available at www.osha.gov. The Center for Disease Control is also an excellent source of information on TB. Visit www.cdc.gov. □

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

An Explanation Of Multi-Employer Worksites

When more than one employer/contractor operates at a single worksite – even if not all at the same time – Cal/OSHA considers it a multi-employer site. Each employer, property and project owner should know his/her responsibilities, assigned roles, and accountability for worker health and safety and work together to identify and control hazards to meet Cal/OSHA standards.

When Cal/OSHA identifies safety violations at a worksite, it evaluates the owner and employer

hierarchy to determine who is responsible for the violation. The hierarchy is generally from the owner/employer to general/prime contractors and then to subcontractors. Cal/OSHA identifies four categories of employers at a multi-employer worksite as follows:

The Creating Employer creates the hazardous condition.

The Exposing Employer employs the workers exposed to a hazard, regardless of whether that employer created the condition.

The Controlling Employer is responsible, by

contract or practice, for the safety and health conditions at the worksite and has the authority to correct the hazard.

The Correcting Employer has the specific responsibility to correct the hazardous condition.

Worksites may contain several or all of the employer categories. A single employer may also fit into more than one of the categories. For example, an employer may be both a

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New Rules For Controlling Concrete Dust

A new section of the Construction Safety Orders of Title 8, §1530.1, Control of Employee Exposures from Dust-Generating Operations Conducted on Concrete or Masonry Materials was adopted in October 2008 to regulate the cutting, grinding, coring, and drilling of concrete and masonry materials.

The reason for the new standard was because of widespread recognition that the cited operations have significant potential – and probably the greatest potential of the operations conducted in construction settings – to generate overexposure to silica dust when the dust generated by these operations is not effectively controlled.

Prior to adoption of the standard, uncontrolled employee exposures to dusts generated from the cutting and grinding of concrete and masonry materials were documented to greatly exceed the allowed levels (Permissible Exposure Limits - PELs) stated in Section 5155. Among particular concern was exposure to airborne respirable crystalline silica. Respirable silica dust is a long-recognized health hazard that can cause or contribute to debilitating and sometimes fatal respiratory diseases including silicosis, lung cancer, and tuberculosis. It is also believed to result, with the absence of these specific



diseases, in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and a decline in pulmonary function.

The basic approach of the new rule is to require the use of water or local exhaust ventilation systems, together with appropriate training, to control the dust generated by the four general activities cited above when performed with powered tools or equipment. This practice is already widespread in the industry as the principle means of using engineering

controls to capture dust and comply with applicable PELs, and this rule is intended to provide a means to enforce the use of this practice by all employers so that all employees and employers are equally protected from those employers who take insufficient action to prevent overexposure.

To view the standard in its entirety, visit <http://www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/concreteandmasonryapprvdtxt.pdf>.

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creating and a correcting employer or a creating and an exposing employer.

Owners/contractors should pre-qualify subcontractors before hiring them because if the subcontractor creates a health and safety violation, both the contractor and the sub may be responsible and subject to a Cal/OSHA citation. Even if the general contractor did not contribute to the hazard and had no employees in the area, as the top of the employer hierarchy, the contractor is still responsible for overseeing the overall health and safety on the worksite. They or the controlling contractor should examine the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP),

insurance loss runs, and a three-year history of Cal/OSHA citations for all subcontractors.

The controlling employer must ensure that each contractor/subcontractor understands and agrees to follow the safety requirements stated in the work contract. The responsibility of the controlling employer does not end with communicating required safety precautions, or notifying the other employers about unsafe conditions or behavior. The controlling employer must do everything within his/her power, up to and including terminating the contract, to maintain a safe workplace and protect all employees on site. □

Be Safe With Good Hygiene

Workers who practice good personal hygiene can prevent the spread of germs and disease, reduce their exposures to chemicals and contaminants, and avoid developing skin allergies, skin conditions, and chemical sensitivities.

One way to assure good hygiene is to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face protection, gloves, coveralls, and boots. Workers should inspect, clean, decontaminate or replace their protective equipment frequently to make sure it isn't damaged and won't collect or absorb irritants.

Periodic hand washing throughout the day is basic to good hygiene; scrubbing with soap and water helps remove germs, contaminants, and chemicals. It can also prevent exposure by ingestion and cross-contamination. Workers should wash their hands before they take breaks at work to eat, drink or smoke; after they use the restroom; and before, during, and after preparing food. To control the spread of germs that can cause the flu or common cold, workers should wash their hands whenever they cough, sneeze, or blow their noses, and whenever they are around someone that is sick.

Showering and face washing after work is also a good idea. Proper personal hygiene and hand protection can help keep workers productive and on the job. □

Safety Topic



Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

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Roofing Safety

Roof work can be hazardous. Accidents occur not only to those who build roofs, but also those who maintain, clean, demolish and inspect them. Although, the specifics may vary from one roof to another, workers should be aware of basic roof hazards and follow recommended procedures to enable safe roof work performance.

Common but avoidable roofing accidents depend on various factors such as the pitch of the roof – the steeper the more difficult it is to maintain footing; moisture – rain, snow or frost may cause slippery conditions; dirt or sawdust – may cause slippery conditions; footwear – always wear good traction shoes/boots; tripping hazards – tools, electric cords, etc. may cause a slip or fall.

Other hazards depend on the type of roofing material or operation:

- A fragile roof doesn't safely support the weight of a person. A roof's fragility – determined by the thickness of the material, span between supports, or the age of the material – should be assessed before work begins.
- Slate and tiles can result in unstable footing, especially when wet. Install properly designed roof ladders or crawling boards for work stability.
- Torch applied roofing operations present heat, burn, and fire hazards from the torch or the asphalt being applied.
- Welding thermoplastic roof membrane requires electricity to heat the membranes and weld them together presenting possible burn or electrocution hazards.

Before performing any roof work, you should identify the possible risks. Then, it is essential to establish a secure way to get on and off the roof. Make sure climbing equipment like ladders and scaffolding are structurally sound and installed properly. As a general rule, a fall arrest system should be used if the working height is greater than seven and one half feet. Maintain good housekeeping on the roof to prevent tools, supplies, and you from falling. And, discontinue roofing activities when conditions are icy, rainy, or windy.



General safe work practices include keeping your center of gravity low and over your feet; keeping your knees bent and being aware of things around you; not carrying too much or having your hands full; preventing things from dropping or rolling off the roof.

If you have questions or safety concerns about a roofing job, talk to your supervisor.



TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By

Safety Recommendations



Safety News

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

Issue One, 2009

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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