

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Four, 2009



Employee Safety Responsibilities

Employers are not the only ones responsible for safety on the job – workers have responsibilities for maintaining a safe workplace too. Do you know your safety responsibilities?

Know and follow all of your employer's health and safety rules such as safe work practices and standard operating procedures. Be familiar with the Cal/OSHA safety requirements that regulate your industry. Know the emergency and evacuation procedures and the location of emergency equipment on your jobsite; clear thinking and immediate action in an emergency can save lives.

Attend all of the safety training that your employer offers. Training helps you identify job hazards and take the appropriate precautions to protect yourself and co-workers. Never operate equipment unless you have been properly trained. Read and understand the material safety data sheet (MSDS) and know the hazards and safe work practices for all of the chemicals that you work with. If you have a question about equipment, a chemical, or a process, ask your supervisor – taking a chance at work can mean taking a chance with your life.

You are responsible for the safety of your own actions while on the job. Conduct yourself professionally and with your mind on your own safety and the safety of others at all times; the workplace is no place for horseplay or lack of attention.

Serve as a good role model to co-workers for safe work practices and behavior. Maintain your personal work area and common areas in a clean and orderly manner; good housekeeping means a safer workplace. Always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) required for your job tasks.



Talk with your supervisor about safety. If you have a suggestion to make a process or equipment safer, speak up! No one knows your job and tools better than you. Immediately warn co-workers and notify your supervisor of any malfunctioning equipment, hazardous conditions, or unsafe behavior in the workplace – someone's life may depend on it. All accidents and near misses should also be reported to your supervisor because investigating these incidents can lead to a safer environment. If you have a job-related injury or illness, promptly report it to your employer and seek appropriate treatment.

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By

Safety Recommendations



Safety News

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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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REMEMBER TO RECYCLE
THIS NEWSLETTER

Safety News

ISSUE FOUR, 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

Safety Has Its (\$\$\$) Rewards

In today's economy, the cost of doing business is skyrocketing. In order to stay in business, companies are looking for ways to hold down expenses. One way business owners can control costs is to keep their workers safe and healthy. Studies show that the cost of a worker injury or illness can add up to thousands of dollars in medical bills, lost work time, and lost income. But, when companies develop and support an on-going safety and health program, those saved dollars can be put towards profits.

Regardless of the size of a company, its safety and health program should reflect the specific business activity, its location, its workforce, and any regulatory requirement that pertains to the business. The safest companies are those where management and workers partner together to create the program. When workers have a say in establishing the rules that apply to them, they're more likely to abide by those rules.

The responsibility for the success of the program is a team effort and depends on all workers in the company understanding the various elements of the program and their role in supporting those elements. The elements of the program should be easily integrated into everyday business operation and implemented to the degree necessary to prevent worker injury or illness. Once in place, the

program should be continually reviewed to assure that it reflects the existing and any new or changed conditions or hazards.

Although specific details of a safety programs may vary from company to company, these are elements common to many successful safety programs:

- There's top management commitment and leadership
- Employees are involved with responsibilities clearly assigned
- A workplace analysis has identified hazards
- Identified hazards were eliminated or controlled
- Relevant safety and health training and protective equipment was provided
- An accident investigation and recordkeeping systems is in place
- Medical and first aid systems are identified and available
- Performance goals and measurements are established



It pays to be safe. A comprehensive safety program can protect a business against financial losses and it can heighten worker morale and increase production. Every injury or illness that's prevented is money saved – money that can be put towards profits. □

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The Expert's Corner

Prevent Injury from Backpacks, Purses, Laptops, and Wallets

People are used to hearing about ergonomics at work, but rarely think about the everyday items used to carry “stuff” that may contribute to physical discomfort and injury. The information below focuses on the ergonomics of what we use to carry our smart phones, computers, and other personal items.

Backpacks are used by people of all ages; unfortunately, they are often overloaded and packed incorrectly. This has contributed to an increase in reported back, shoulder, and neck pain.

- Wear both straps over both shoulders with the backpack over the mid-back muscles.
- Avoid the shoulder straps from being too loose or too tight.
- Keep the weight of the backpack within 10-15% of the user's bodyweight. Carry only what is needed and organize the contents by placing the heavier items closest to the back.

Purses have grown in size and weight and, as



the saying goes, “the bigger the bag, the more stuff will fill it”. Single-strap purses cause uneven loading of the back muscles and restrict blood flow at the shoulder.

- Keep purses as light as possible by carrying only what is essential.
- Avoid thin straps, long straps, and chain handles.
- Regularly switch shoulders when carrying.

Laptop bags are typically single-strap models,

carried over one shoulder. The weight of the laptop and other bag contents can place considerable strain on the shoulder muscles, restrict blood flow, and pinch nerves.

- Consider using a bag with wheels or a two-strap backpack.
- Alternate carrying the bag by switching sides and holding it down close.
- Avoid using a sling-style messenger bag.

Wallets may be smaller, but they can contribute to extreme pain in the low back. Sitting on a wallet in the back pocket can cause damage to key nerves in the back. Always remove the wallet from the back pocket when sitting and/or driving. Consider a thinner, smaller style wallet and carry only what is necessary. □

Kristy Schultz, MS, CIE, is a Certified Industrial Ergonomist with State Fund and is based in Northern California.

Crafting Safe Woodworking Habits

Woodworkers use machines, hand tools, and chemicals, to cut, fit, fasten, and finish wood materials into furniture, cabinetry, and other products. Hazards in the woodshop include severe cuts, punctures, and amputations; chemical and dust exposures with skin and respiratory irritation, and ergonomic injuries. Control these safety risks with preparation and precautions.

Get training and read the manufacturer's instructions for each piece of equipment that

you use. Get training on the chemicals that you use; read material safety data sheets (MSDS) for proper mix ratio, safety equipment, cleanup, and disposal information.

Safety glasses prevent wood splinters from flying into your eyes. Wear hearing protection in the shop and around loud equipment. Wear close fitting clothes, tie your hair back, and remove jewelry to prevent getting caught in powered, moving equipment. Wear sturdy work gloves while handling stock material, but

use chemical-resistant gloves when using chemicals and finishes. Sturdy work boots protect your toes and a slip resistant sole lessens the chance of slips and falls. Consider respiratory protection to prevent inhaling dust and fumes from chemicals and finishes.

Good lighting helps you see what you are doing. Practice power and hand tool safety. Inspect and maintain your tools and equip-

Continued on next page

Vehicle Backing Safety Tips

Backing is the most common type of vehicle accident and speed is the most common cause of accidents.

Before you back a vehicle, do a walk around the vehicle to check under and around it for obstructions or other dangerous situations. Insure that there is plenty of clearance around the vehicle for backing. Make sure that the area behind the vehicle is clear of obstacles, pedestrians and, other vehicles before you move.

If the vehicle is equipped with a backup alarm and/or is required to use the alarm, make sure that it's working properly. If you don't have a backup alarm but feel that it's necessary to notify others that you're backing, you can put on your flashers and honk the horn as you back up.

When you are backing, make sure that you do so slowly. Before you move, if possible, place your arm along the seat backs and turn your head to the left and right to look directly out the sides and back of the vehicle. If you can't look directly out of the vehicle, use your side and rear-



view mirrors to look in all directions to the rear of the vehicle.

Sometimes a spotter can assist you with a backing maneuver by sharing the responsibility for watching the rear of the vehicle. If you must use a spotter outside the vehicle, make sure that you can see each

other in the side-view mirror at all times. Do not proceed with backing if you lose sight of the spotter. Two-way radios and/or hand signals can be used to help you both communicate.

If you're the person acting as a spotter or you work near backing vehicles, listen for the backup alarms and watch vehicle movement.

Never assume that the driver sees you and knows where you're going. Do not walk alongside or ride a backing vehicle. And, wear highly visible clothing if you are going to be working on foot around backing vehicles. □

Continued from previous page

ment properly. Use lockout/blockout before clearing jams, changing blades, and performing maintenance. Make sure that moving parts are properly guarded. Replace or tagout tools if they or their safety devices don't function properly.

Prevent cuts, punctures, amputations, and worse from shop tools by thinking while you use them. Know where your hands are at all times. When using cutting tools, check stock for metal that can be propelled by the spinning blade. Never place your hand near the blade. Use a push stick. Never force a board into a cutting blade, this can cause kickback or contact with the blade.

Prevent slips, trips and falls by practicing good housekeeping. Control chemical fumes and airborne dust to prevent exposures, fire, and explosion. Apply finishes in spray booths or well-ventilated areas. Store chemicals with their lids on tight. Keep flammables in a flammable cabinet. Dispose of dirty rags and paper towels in flammable cans with self-closing lids.

Using tools and equipment to do fine, detailed, or repetitive work all day can cause fatigue, increasing your risk of ergonomic injury. Rotate your work tasks to use a variety of muscles each day. Take frequent micro-breaks to give your muscles a break. □

Practice Preventive Maintenance

This time of year is an opportune time, when many construction activities have slowed, to look over and service your work-related vehicles, equipment, machinery, and tools. Preventive maintenance during "down time" is important because it assures that when construction activities get back into full swing the equipment needed to get the job done will be ready and in prime and safe operating condition. But, more importantly, this maintenance can prevent or minimize the frequency and severity of worker injury.

The time and money spent on preventive maintenance is minimal compared with the potential consequences of equipment failure. If a mechanical problem occurs while working, a hasty repair could put workers at risk for personal injury. Repairing or replacing machinery and tools can prevent future equipment failure and subsequent loss work time. Additionally, a machine that is well cared for can be more productive, so fewer operating hours are required to complete a needed task. For example, an engine tune-up can save you in fuel consumption and increase its maximum power. And, there's the benefit of energy conservation.

Vehicles, equipment, machinery, and tool servicing requirements may vary, so check the operating manual for specific instructions and recommendations. □

