

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

Cal/OSHA Inspections

Cal/OSHA inspectors periodically make unannounced visits to ensure California workplaces are safe and healthy. During an inspection, it's important to know what to expect and how to respond.

Cal/OSHA will conduct site inspections in cases of imminent danger or industrial accidents. A

fatal injury to one or more employees; a serious injury or illness; a serious exposure; or the inpatient hospitalization, regardless of duration, of three (3) or more employees (a catastrophe) will also trigger an accident investigation and must be reported to Cal/OSHA within 8 hours.

Inspectors often visit high-hazard work sites and industries with loss rates at or above Bureau of Labor Statistics averages. And, they will visit a worksite in response to an employee complaint of an imminent danger.

All employees should know which management staff is to be notified when an inspector arrives. The Cal/OSHA inspector will then present proper identification and in a conference with the management representative explain the reason for the visit and request permission to conduct a site inspection.

The inspectors can walk around the entire facility or a targeted work area; they can interview employees in private and document hazards with photos and measurements. The management representa-

tive should accompany the inspector at all times, though private employee interviews can be arranged in controlled access conference rooms. The inspection focus should be limited to only the documents and facility areas listed in the opening conference. If the inspector takes measurements or readings, the representative should conduct the same measurements and readings simultaneously, keeping all notes, photos, and records from the visit.

After the walkthrough, the inspector should conduct a closing conference to provide inspection results, next steps, and timelines. Inspectors may request protocols, work procedures, or other documents. The Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) may be

required immediately, since it is required to be readily accessible to employees. Conduct follow-up investigations, corrective actions, and gather requested documents and provide them to the inspector by the stated deadline. Missed deadlines can result in further site inspections or citations.

Start planning now to present a competent, organized, and compliant response to a Cal/OSHA inspection. Designate and train staff to respond to Cal/OSHA inspectors. Maintain your safety programs and employee training procedures at appropriate levels. Keep safety records organized and on site and ensure key staff know how to access them. □



In This Issue

Feature Articles

Cal/Osha Inspections

The Expert's Corner –
Tuberculosis –
A Continuing Threat

Now Hear This

Prevent Dust Explosions

Revised Exit Law

Safety Topic –
Eye Protection

In Each Issue

Employer Education Series
Reporting Injuries

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COMPENSATION
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The Expert's Corner

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. □

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Now Hear This

Many workers take their hearing for granted. A loss in hearing can happen gradually, without pain, so it may not be noticed until it's too late. Then, even a hearing aid may not help. Hearing loss can affect job performance, cause stress or health-related problems (increased heart rate, fatigue, irritability, tension), and can lead to unnecessary accidents or injuries on the job. While hearing loss may result from a single exposure to a noise or explosion, such traumatic losses are rare. Most cases of hearing

loss begin gradually in frequencies slightly above that of human speech and then subtly spread to lower and higher frequencies. Continuous or intermittent exposure to loud noises, such as those created by tools, equipment or vehicles over a period of time may result in hearing loss. The amount of noise exposure over a period of time, the intensity or loudness, and the duration or length of exposure determine the ability to damage hearing. The loss could be temporary or it may be permanent if the inner ear is damaged.

Engineering controls are the first line of protection against hearing loss because they can eliminate or reduce noise at the source. Whenever possible, choose noise-controlled equipment. When purchasing equipment or tools, ask for "quiet" models, ones with a noise-reducing option or those that are enclosed or acoustically lined.

If engineering controls are not possible because of cost or the equipment itself, then

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Prevent Dust Explosions

When combustible or non-combustible materials are broken down into fine dusts or powders, they create a fire and explosion hazard affecting many operations and materials: sugar, flour, animal feed, plastics, paper, wood, rubber, furniture, textiles, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, paints and resins, dyes, coal, and metals.

To prevent fires from dust explosions, control the “dust explosion pentagon.” This includes the traditional fire triangle: fuel, heat, and oxygen along with a dust cloud and enclosed space. Keep dust levels (fuel) in the workplace to a minimum with dust control and housekeeping. Control flame and ignition sources (heat) such as pilot lights, open flames, hot equipment, and static electricity. Never allow smoking in the worksite.

Static electricity is a serious explosion and fire ignition source, but grounding prevents this. Cal/OSHA defines effective grounding as linking equipment to earth through a connection that has “low impedance” and enough current-carrying capacity to prevent hazardous voltages.

Dust collection, filtering, and treatment prevent explosions by removing dust from the air. Dust col-

lectors should be hooked up outdoors or in a separate room. Wet spray dust collectors can be located inside the building. For grinding, shredding, or pulverizing equipment, use pneumatic or magnetic separators to remove metal and debris that could ignite a fire. Lay out your facility so that machines with dust explosion hazards are enclosed or facing away from populated work areas to minimize the fire and energy impact if there is an explosion.

Establish a routine cleaning schedule to remove dust from floors, ledges, beams, equipment, or other surfaces. Clean often enough to prevent dust buildup. If production changes and dust piles up faster than your schedule, clean more often. Create a checklist that identifies all areas to be cleaned so you don't miss any. Use the proper tools, equipment, and safety procedures to clean dust from heights.

Attention to housekeeping and cleaning can prevent secondary explosions, which occur when an initial dust cloud ignites, explodes, and topples a duct, pipe, or other accumulation of dust. The newly airborne dust can then form a second explosive dust cloud, often larger and more deadly than the first. □

Continued from previous page

administrative controls should be employed. Adjust work schedules so that exposure to high noise levels does not occur for the entire workday. This allows a noise recovery period to be part of the work shift. Place noisy machinery in areas that are away from workers or reduce the number of workers in a noisy area and run the loudest operations at times when the fewest workers are around.

Also important is the use of personal protection devices, such as ear plugs and ear muffs. Training should be provided on the protec-

tion devices available and the effects of noise on hearing if workers don't use the protection. Training should include the fit, use, and care of any hearing protection device.



You can't always prevent noise but you can lessen the chance of hearing loss by ensuring that workers follow established safety procedures and use proper hearing protection.

Remember, hearing loss can be progressive, painless, and permanent but it can also be prevented. □

Revised Exit Law

In 2008, the standard for the number of exits required for a worksite was revised.

The law now requires every building or usable portion thereof to have at least two exits to permit prompt evacuation of employees and other building occupants during an emergency. The exits must be located as far away as practicable from each other so that if one exit is inaccessible because of fire or smoke, employees can evacuate using the second exit.

A single exit is permitted where the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy or the arrangement of the workplace is such that all employees would be able to evacuate safely during an emergency.

More than two exits must be provided in a workplace if the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy, or the arrangement of the workplace is such that all employees would not be able to evacuate safely during an emergency if only two exits were provided.

For assistance in determining the number of exits in your workplace, and their distance requirements, consult Title 24, Part 2, California Code of Regulations, and your local fire department, or visit <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3228.html>. □

Safety News

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News about Occupational Safety and Health in Manufacturing

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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 Manufacturing 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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