

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Four, 2009

Flu Prevention And Control

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a variety of influenza viruses. Although anyone can contract the flu, some people are more vulnerable – such as people with weakened immune systems or chronic illnesses, older adults or young children, and those who work with the public.

The germs of the virus can more readily travel from person to person through the air or be transmitted from direct contact with an infected person or contaminated object, when people gather together or interact closely.

The Center for Disease Control suggests that the single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. You can get a flu vaccine from your doctor, at public health centers and many pharmacies. While getting a flu vaccine each year is the best means of prevention, there are also flu antiviral drugs that can be used to prevent and treat the flu.

Symptoms of the flu tend to appear suddenly, whereas symptoms of a cold develop slowly. Common signs and symptoms of the flu include generally a high fever, chills, headache and muscular aches, fatigue, congestion, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.

Several ways to prevent the spread of flu germs are to: wash your hands often with soap or an antibacterial sanitizer; avoid

touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. You should also get plenty of sleep, be physically



active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. When possible, avoid close contact with persons who are sick and when you are sick stay home from work, school, and errands to prevent others from catching your illness.

If you become sick stay home, rest, and drink plenty of liquids. Consult your doctor early for the best treatment and be aware of emergency warning signs that require urgent medical attention – including labored breathing; fever with rash; confusion, dizziness, unresponsiveness; severe vomiting, and pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen. If you are house-bound with the flu, it's a good idea to have a supply of foods like soup, crackers, and drinks, etc. as well as household products such as tissues and toilet paper. □

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

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Location _____

Attended By

Safety Recommendations



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Loss Control Services

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News about Occupational Safety and Health in Public Agencies

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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 Public Agencies 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

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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

December Is National 3D Month

Statistics show that drug- and alcohol-impaired drivers kill or injure themselves and innocent victims every hour of the day, every day of the year. Despite the continued efforts of public and private organizations, businesses, and individuals to curb these troubling statistics, impaired-driver accidents continue to occur. For its part, State Fund turns its attention each December to the serious consequences of impaired-drivers by observing National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month. In support of the 3D Month campaign, State Fund encourages its insured employers and their employees to avoid driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to stop others from driving impaired, and to increase community awareness about impaired-driver issues.



injured, injure others or lose their job as a result of their actions.

Employers can play an important role in preventing their workers from driving drunk and drugged. To further the decrease in drug or alcohol-related vehicle accidents, businesses and communities must implement and enforce strategies that are known to be effective - such as ongoing substance abuse education programs, drug testing programs, and adopting “zero tolerance” policies.

State Fund urges its insured employers to support 3D Month by educating their employees about the dangers of driving under the influence of controlled substances, training them to stop others from getting behind the wheel when impaired, and encouraging employees to report impaired drivers to the proper authority.

For many Californians, December is a month of seasonal celebrations, but it is also a month when impaired-driver incidents increase. State Fund knows that drug- and alcohol-related vehicle incidents cost employers in many ways – from the loss of an employee as a result of an injury or death, to an increase in medical and or/workers’ compensation costs, and the disruption of work or the work process. Impaired drivers hurt not only themselves but also their families, if they are

Every person has a responsibility to drive free of drugs and alcohol and to insist that co-workers, friends, and family members do the same. State Fund offers a selection of products and materials to assist its insured employers in their safe driving education efforts. Call your local State Fund office for details or visit the website of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov> for information and materials relating to 3D Month. □

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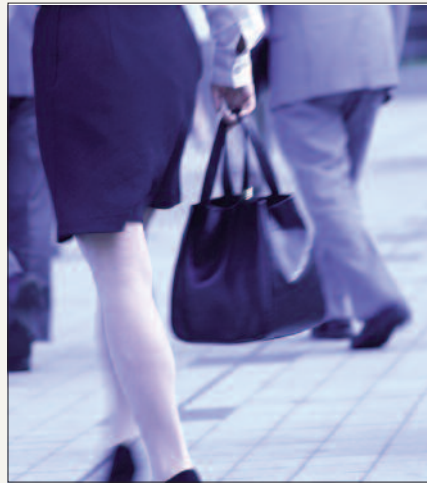
Prevent Injury From Backpacks, Purses, Laptops, And Wallets

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.

Wipe Out Slip And Fall Incidents

Slips and falls are a major cause of injury in the workplace. Research shows that slips and falls are usually caused by the unsafe action of an individual (not necessarily by the fall victim), because of an unsafe condition (such as the surface material or its maintenance) or as a result of both. What do experts recommend as the single most important step in preventing slips and falls? Train workers to practice good housekeeping. Workers should know how to recognize slip hazards, how to eliminate them, and how to avoid them.



The unsafe action of the individual might be due to age, illness, fatigue, emotional distress,

poor vision, reaction to medication, alcohol, inattentiveness, sudden distractions, hurrying or horseplay.

Unsafe conditions may include poor lighting; poor contrast (or no contrast) of colors in floor treads or floor levels; uneven walking surfaces (warped floors, missing tiles, curled or raised edges of rugs, mats, and runners); raised edge or lip of a loading dock plate;

Continued on next page

Make Yourself Comfortable

Many of today's jobs require employees to spend long hours working at a computer. Most sit slouched or hunched over the computer rapidly and repeatedly entering data. Many hours of applying constant force to muscles, joints or tendons and working in awkward postures can overstress body parts and increase the chance of a debilitating musculoskeletal injury. One of the most effective ways to decrease the possibility of injury is to make sure the computer workstation and the individual are a good ergonomic fit.

The equipment – Raise or lower the desk, chair, or computer screen to fit the individual. The monitor should be at a comfortable distance so the worker does not strain the neck or eyes to see the screen. The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level. Input document papers should be in a holder at the same level as the screen. Padded arm rests, telephone headsets, back supports, and footrests can take pressure off of arms, neck, and lower back.



The worker – It's important to flex the hands, shoulders, and neck before, during, and after long hours at the computer; and, to vary eye focus or work activities, when possible.

When seated at the computer, the spine should have its normal curve with the feet on the floor or on a footrest. Workers should be reminded to keep hands, arms, and shoulders loose and relaxed. The neck should be straight, the head centered above the spine, the knees and arms bent roughly at 90-degree angles or greater, and the wrists and hands straight.

The risk of injury increases if the body doesn't have time to rest or recover. So, periodic breaks or varying work activities is beneficial. Workers should let supervisor know if they need assistance in arranging their workstation and encourage them to report if they are experiencing pain or discomfort during or after computer work. □

Continued from previous page

improperly anchored plate or no side rails on plates; and improper floor cleaning (finishing, seal coating, waxing).

Care should be taken before entering a room. Are there changes in lighting or signs of flooring change? Floor color can conceal a change in friction or angle between adjacent surfaces. An unexpected shift from a smooth to a slick surface heightens the likelihood of a slip or fall. Maintenance workers should insure that waxes and polishes cover an entire area and extend to natural breaks in flooring.

When walking through an area, workers should look for spills, grease spots or dust (machine byproducts can be highly slippery). Water spilled by drinking

fountains or tracked in on wet or snowy days can create a major hazard. Look around and be aware of wet areas or objects on the floor; then take the time to do something about it. Clean up the hazard or place cones or hazard signs nearby, warning of the danger. People can walk on extremely slippery surfaces by modifying their speed and stride, provided they know about the dangerous condition. It's the lack of warning that can cause problems.

Slips can occur because of how you walk on a surface. Some simple things you can do to minimize your chance of slipping and falling would be to wear appropriate footwear; watch where you're going; take slow, short steps where slip potential is high; and use hand holds where possible. □

Clearing Up Dermatitis

Dermatitis is an inflammation of the skin from exposure to an irritant. It can occur from one exposure or from long or repeated exposures. Dermatitis is easier to prevent than to cure and personal cleanliness – like washing the skin area exposed to the irritant with a mild soap – is one of the best preventive measures.

Chemicals are the most frequent cause of dermatitis. Mechanical causes include friction, pressure, and trauma resulting in abrasions, wounds, bruises, or foreign bodies (like glass fiber) getting into the skin. Physical agents leading to dermatitis are excessive heat, cold, sunlight, ultraviolet light, X-rays or other ionizing radiation. Biological agents including bacteria, viruses, fungi, poisonous plants, and insects can cause or complicate occupational dermatitis.

Eliminate skin contact with irritating substances or substitute less toxic and irritating ones where possible.

Engineering controls, such as enclosures, guards or mechanical handling devices, can help minimize contact with hazardous substances. Protective clothing and equipment, including aprons, eye and face shields, finger cots, gloves, and chemical-resistant clothing can also help, if they are kept clean and in good repair. Laundering procedures should be emphasized to ensure that irritating materials are removed from clothing and not taken home. □

