



# Safety News

ISSUE FOUR, 2007

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

## Manage Stress To Your Advantage

**A**lthough stress is a fact of life, when recognized, managed, and positively directed it can increase work efficiency and productivity.

In pre-historic times, stressful situations were life threatening and humans were designed to react to those stressors as such. After the threat was removed, the individual was able to relax and recover. But, in today's world, threats are more abstract... the work environment, dealing with other workers or the public, personal or financial pressures, job boredom, deadlines, rushes, uncontrollable world events, etc. When the natural human defense responses are activated and allowed to build up without recovery time, the result could have detrimental consequences on the individual or in the workplace.

So how can you ensure that stress will be positively managed and directed? Acknowledge that it exists in everyone's lives, including the workplace, and that people vary in their stress thresholds or recovery rates. Understand that some stressors can be controlled or managed and some stressors can't be changed or eliminated. Find out what resources are available to you should your stress become a condition you're unable to manage on your own.

Keep communication lines open by talking to your employer or supervisor. In staff meetings explain your frustrations or share your ideas for reducing stressful work situations. Talk about what's going on. Make sure your compliments on work practices outnumber your criticisms.



Make sure you're a good match for your job. As the saying goes... "if you can't take the heat, stay out of the kitchen." If the stress of your current job is too much for you, maybe it's time for a job change.

Outside of the workplace, adopt a healthy personal lifestyle including practicing relaxation techniques, estab-

lishing good eating habits, watching alcohol or drug consumption, exercising, and developing a personal support network.

Positive stress management is about balance. Balancing stress with relaxation, compliments with criticisms, work with play, problems with rewards, and positives and negatives. You may not be able to control all the stress-producing elements at work or at home, but you can learn to balance those stresses and control how you respond to them. Channel your stress to your advantage. Unmanaged stress can take a dangerous toll on your health and your job but constructively managing it can have significant payoffs! □

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INSURANCE  
**FUND**

## The Expert's Corner

# Moving Ergonomically

**L**ifting, packing and moving boxes is not something the average worker does everyday, but if you happen to find yourself in the middle of a move, these activities may be part of your day. Prevent injuries with your next move by following the guidelines below.

- Clean it out! Get rid of unnecessary stuff, so you only pack what you really need.
- Start early, so that you don't try to rush and pack everything at the last minute.
- Warm-up and stretch. Packing boxes is generally not what we normally do each day.
- Doing work that you are unaccustomed to is a sure fire way to get some aches and pains. Stretch, pack, then stretch some more. Pace yourself.
- Reduce bending. Place empty boxes on a desk or a chair, not the floor, to pack them so you are not bending forward constantly.
- Change your posture frequently.
- Don't over-pack a box. Even if you don't have to lift it, the movers do. A box full of paper or books can be heavy so spread out the loads in multiple boxes.



- Lift as little as possible but if you *have* to lift...
  - Plan the lift and test the load.
  - Get help. Use a buddy or material handling equipment.
  - Keep the load close.
  - Tighten your stomach muscles as you lift.
  - Lift with your legs and keep your back straight.
  - Lower the load the same way.

- Never catch a falling box. Some back injuries occur as reactions to sudden shifts in the box or its contents. You might instinctively reach out to prevent breakage and end up injuring your back.
- Use a CART! If you have to move boxes or material, use a cart or a hand truck. Make sure the path is clear and that the cart is in good working order.
- Use good boxes with handholds. Handholds can make moving much easier and safer and encourage proper lifting techniques. Awkward grips can cause the box to slip.

Be realistic with your personal abilities. If you need help, ask for it. Sometimes, you can get caught up in the chaos and speed of the move and try to lift or do more than you really should. Realizing when you have met your match can help prevent back injuries. □

*Helen Chandler, CIE is an Ergonomics Consultant with the State Compensation Insurance Fund.*

## Cross Out Contamination

**W**hen recommended safe work practices are not strictly followed, workers can spread contaminants around the worksite and into their homes from clothing, shoes, and skin contact. Contaminants can also be transferred by way of items workers touch, sit on or walk on. Good personal hygiene, including hand washing, showering, and changing dirty clothing and shoes, can help prevent cross contamination.

Most workers that handle chemicals and con-

taminants in the workplace are aware that the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, safety glasses, respirators, coveralls, and boots can reduce or eliminate their exposures. But, if workers don't properly wash, remove or decontaminate soiled PPE and skin after leaving the work area, they can spread the contaminants outside the work zone to themselves, their coworkers, and to their family, homes, and cars.

The spread of contaminants is hazardous

when unprotected workers, coworkers or family members come into contact with the substance. Skin exposures occur if they touch a soiled surface and accidental ingestion can occur if they eat or drink something that has been contaminated. The contaminants of concern include chemicals such as solvents, herbicides, and pesticides and industrial materials such as lead, asbestos, and fiberglass. Potentially infectious materials such

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# Caught In A Pinch?

**H**ave you ever been so caught up in doing a job quickly that your attention to safety became lax? Or, have you ever been so tired, preoccupied or thinking about something other than the work at hand that you inadvertently put yourself in harm's way? Although, these behaviors could be attributed to human nature, they could also contribute to a serious injury. Pay attention to what you're doing. If you notice your mind is wandering from the safe performance of your job, catch yourself before you end up with a pinch, cut or crush injury.

"Caught between" hazards occur when you or a part of your body gets in the path of a moving object as it closes in on a stationary object. Your safety habits should alert you to take precautions by keeping a safe distance from any moving machinery or even equipment such as a door or drawer.

"Catch points" are created by objects – either stationary or in motion – having sharp corners, splines, teeth or other rough shapes and surfaces,



such as rotating drills, cutters or nails which can catch a worker or clothing. Wearing proper clothing will help control this hazard. Guards should be in place and sharp protrusions on furniture or equipment removed, safely covered or flattened.

"Run-in" points or "mash and crush" hazards are created by belts, gears, conveyors, ropes, cables, gears or pulleys. To control these hazards, maintain and use proper guarding and know about the equipment. Never operate or work close to unfamiliar equipment.

"Squeeze points" are created when two items move toward one another and the distance between them reduces causing a crushing injury to the person caught in between. This can happen when moving material or machinery.

"Nip or cut" hazards can be caused when two objects pass one another like shears or cutters.

Keep your mind on safety, especially when you're working in situations where you could be caught in, on or between the materials and equipment with which you work. □

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as blood and other body fluids pose a bloodborne pathogen hazard.

When workers hug family members, prepare food, and touch the furniture, bedding, and carpets in the home, they could contaminate them if they have not washed their skin and removed or decontaminated soiled clothing and PPE. Workers can contaminate their coworkers and the worksite when they contact areas such as the break room, restroom, or office areas. Workers can also increase their own exposures if they eat, drink or smoke before washing their hands and removing or cleaning their PPE.

Cross contamination in the workplace can be prevented by removing or decontaminating PPE and washing hands before exiting the work zone. To prevent cross contamination at home, workers should wash their hands and face at the end of a work shift and change into clean clothes and shoes. Workers can also take a shower and wash their hair before leaving work or as soon as they get home. Work clothes should be washed in hot water, separately from the family clothing, and given two rinse cycles. □

# State Fund Fights Fraud

Workers' compensation fraud not only affects a specific employer or business it also impacts California's overall economy. That's why preventing workers' compensation fraud is a top priority at State Fund, one that is addressed with vigorous anti-fraud programs.

A dedicated team of specialized fraud investigators operates in each of State Fund's district offices. These specialists are supported by experts in State Fund's core Fraud Investigation Program (FIP) and by staff attorneys dedicated to prosecuting cases of fraud. State Fund's claims adjusters, underwriters, auditors, and fraud specialists maintain a strong working relationship with fraud prosecutors and law enforcement officials at local, state, and federal levels. The joint effort of these individuals and organizations has resulted in arrests and convictions for all types of workers' compensation fraud including: premium, claims, and service-provider fraud.

To support its insureds in their fight against fraud, State Fund has produced and offers educational and training materials - such as videos, posters, and brochures - on how to prevent, detect, and report fraud. State Fund encourages its insured to join in the fight against fraud by calling their local district office today and taking advantage of the free anti-fraud material. □

# Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Four, 2007



## Safe (Winter) Driving

**M**otor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of work-related injury or death and winter weather presents the most dangerous time of year for operating a vehicle on the road. Since you can't change the weather, you must adjust the way you drive or risk becoming a fatal statistic.

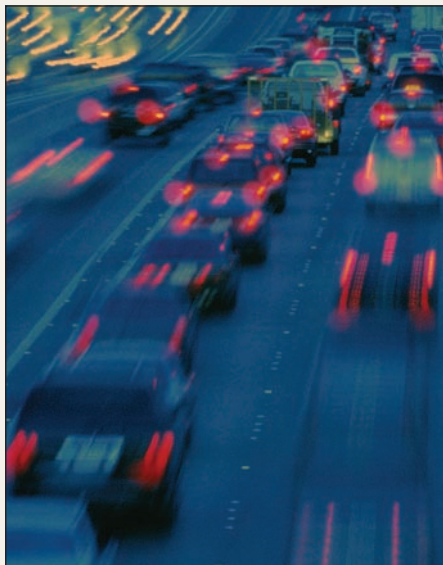
Too many drivers think they can drive the same way in bad weather as on nice days, but that kind of thinking leads to accidents. The two most reliable things against vehicle accidents are your common sense and driving skill. In order to survive winter driving you must give more thought to the weather and resulting road conditions and adjust your driving accordingly.

First, realize that your trip will probably take longer in the rain, fog, wind or snow, so leave earlier and take your time. It's better to arrive late than not at all. Be patient and drive defensively. Look at what's going on around you and think ahead; anticipate the actions of other drivers.

Slow down. Driving too fast on slippery winter roads reduces tire traction making skids more likely so increase your braking

distance. A safe slow speed will give you more control of your vehicle if the traffic ahead changes or if you come upon an icy road slick or dense fog patch. Increase the distance between your vehicle and the one ahead to leave a buffer zone for safe braking, you may need to stop suddenly.

Keep your lights on for safety. Your vehicle



will be easier to spot by other drivers on dark days or in extreme winter weather conditions. Low beams should be used when driving in fog or heavy snow.

You'll be safer in a well-kept vehicle, so keep your vehicle gassed up and in good operating con-

dition. Inspect it regularly to ensure that the equipment is in proper working order including lights, brakes, windshield wipers, heater/defroster, battery, radiator, and tires. It's also a good idea to have a well-stocked emergency kit in your car with flashlight, flares, jumper cables, gloves, shovel, blankets, water, etc.

By combining sound driving skills with common sense, you can survive this winter driving.

### TOPIC REVIEW

**Instructor** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Attended By**

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#### Safety Recommendations

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# Safety News

News about Occupational Safety and Health in  
State Contract Agencies

## STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

Loss Control Services

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## How to Order State Fund Safety Materials and Audio Visuals

To order **safety materials** from State Fund's Safety Materials Catalog, State Contract Agencies must complete the *Safety & Health Services Materials Order Form* and include the listed catalog item number and quantity. The cost of each item for State Contract Agencies is \$1.00 with a required \$50.00 minimum order per order form. Prior to shipping, all orders must be prepaid by check payable to State Compensation Insurance Fund and sent along with the order form to:

State Compensation Insurance Fund  
Safety and Health Services Dept.  
1275 Market Street, Room 630  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

OR

State Compensation Insurance Fund  
Safety and Health Services Dept.  
P.O. Box 420807  
San Francisco, CA 94120-7264  
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

To request a copy of the Safety Material Catalog or for questions about safety materials, contact the Safety and Health Services department at 415-975-2400 and ask for the Safety Materials Coordinator.

**Audio videos** are available to State Contract Agencies free of charge by State Fund. To request a video, Agencies must complete the *State Contract Audio Visual Request Form* and submit it directly to the Safety and Health Services Audio Visual Library. Videos are mailed at least one week prior to the viewing date and must be returned within seven days of the viewing date. Audio visuals must be returned in bubble-wrap, padded envelope or secure box to prevent damage. They must be shipped UPS Ground

or by "PRIORITY" U.S. mail and be insured for \$400.00 each. The borrowing Agency assumes responsibility for replacements costs for all lost videos and will be billed for replacement by State Fund.

All audio visual requests must include: the name of the requesting State Contract Agency Department; the name and phone number of the Agency contact person responsible; and the desired viewing date. No more than three audio visuals may be held by an Agency location at any one time. Additional requests for audio visuals will not be sent out until all outstanding videos have been returned. Agencies may mail audio visual requests to:

State Compensation Insurance Fund  
Safety and Health Services A/V Library  
1275 Market Street, Room 630  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

OR  
State Compensation Insurance Fund  
Safety and Health Services A/V Library  
P.O. Box 420807  
San Francisco, CA 94120-7264  
Attn: Safety Materials Coordinator

Audiovisuals may also be requested by:  
FAX – (415) 975-2444  
Phone – (415)-975-2415  
E-mail – avlibrary@scif.com

To request a free copy of the **Audio Visual Catalog**, contact the Safety and Health Services A/V Library as listed above. ☐

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