



Safety News

ISSUE TWO, 2008

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

Prevent Strains And Sprains

Strains and sprains account for a majority of workplace injuries and lost work time. The injuries are often caused by lifting, pushing, pulling or overreaching and usually affect the back, shoulders, and arms. Preventing strain and sprain injuries is a lot easier than correcting them.

Reaching

Strain increases in proportion to the distance of the work from your body. There's less strain on your body if the work is positioned between your shoulders and knees, with a waist-high level being the most neutral and comfortable. So, try to work with your arms below your shoulder level and stay as close to the work area as possible. You may need to raise or lower yourself with a stool or ladder for better positioning. When reaching down, put one hand on your thigh to support your back.

Bending

Strains and sprains can occur from activities performed in awkward positions or when bending over and relying on your back for support rather than your leg muscles. When performing activities below your waist, bend your knees and squat down to position yourself closer to

the work. If the task requires you to maintain a squatting position for a while, alternate kneeling down on one knee to transfer the load off your legs or back and onto the floor.



Pushing or Pulling

Sometimes equipment can put more strain on your body if you push or pull it incorrectly. If given the choice, push rather than pull a load. But, in both cases, get as close to the load as possible. When pushing a load, use both hands and arms keeping them in close to your body; keep your back straight

and lean into the load; then, use your whole body weight and leg muscles to walk the load as you push. If pulling a load, use both hands and arms; keep your back straight and lean away from the load; and again, use your whole body weight and leg muscles to walk the load as you pull.

Your body works best when it's used as it was designed. When you force your body to do things beyond its capability, you risk a strain or sprain injury. How can you prevent these injuries? The obvious thing is to keep yourself in good physical condition and work within your limits. □

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The Expert's Corner

Grip Force And Gloves

People wear gloves for many different reasons and occasions. Whether people are making fashion statements, participating in their favorite pastime, or simply working, properly fitting gloves can be an important accessory for completing tasks comfortably, efficiently, and safely. Gloves improve grip when handling tools and slippery objects, and they protect the hands from extreme temperatures, sharp or abrasive materials, and guard against the effects of toxic and corrosive substances.

While gloves provide excellent protection against many hazards, they can be hazardous if they do not fit properly. When gloves are too loose, extra force needs to be applied in order to get a good firm grip. Because of this, there is a loss of grip strength, in comparison to not wearing any gloves at all. This, in effect, causes double work: performing the job at hand and overcoming any movement or slippage from the glove. On the other hand, when gloves are too tight, they interfere with grasping, dexterity, and finger movement. Additional force is needed in order to flex the tight

gloves, especially if they are thick.

Wearing ill-fitting gloves requires the wearer to apply additional grip force that would not be required if the gloves fit correctly. Over time, greater grip forces applied can lead to fatigue, discomfort, and eventual injury to the hands and arms.



The following points should be considered when selecting the right glove for the job:

- Gloves with rubber dots on the surface increase grip stability on surfaces that are slippery (e.g., wet items or items

without handles).

- For slippery surfaces, workers use greater grip force when wearing cotton gloves than with rubber gloves. Cotton gloves perform better with non-slippery surfaces.
- Rubber gloves allow employees to maintain relatively low grip force levels for both slippery and non-slippery surfaces.
- Studies by the University of Osaka suggest that rubber gloves help reduce force and provide more efficient control than cotton gloves in tasks requiring precision handling of small objects.
- Performance time for cotton gloves tends to be longer than that for rubber gloves.
- In addition to carefully selecting the type of glove provided to workers, gloves of different sizes should also be provided.

Information above refers to a research study conducted at the School of Health and Sport Sciences at the University of Osaka, Japan. □

Lou Vicario is one of State Fund's Certified Associate Ergonomists based in Southern California.

Check Out State Fund's Online IIPP Builder

Since 1991, the California Code of Regulations has required employers to establish, implement, and maintain an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) to ensure that all California employers meet their legal obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace for their employees.

An IIPP is a written plan that details the required steps employers must take to protect their employees from workplace hazards. If a

Cal/OSHA inspector visits a workplace, one of the first things he/she will ask is to see the company's IIPP. The benefits of having an effective IIPP include: reducing work-related injuries and illnesses, decreasing financial losses resulting from work-related injuries, and avoiding costly Cal/OSHA fines.

As a service to our policyholders, State Fund has developed an online tool called the IIPP Builder. This interactive tool enables you to create an Injury and Illness Prevention

Program specific to your business operation and allows you to download various forms and checklists to use when implementing your IIPP. The IIPP Builder contains tutorials that will guide you through the steps necessary to compose your customized safety program. The IIPP Builder will not only enable you to create and update your IIPP, it's also designed to help you understand IIPP requirements and to determine if your

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Keep Young Workers Safe

Jobs teach adolescent workers responsibility, give them a sense of the real world, provide them with extra spending money, and in some cases, supplement family income. To employers, they can be a necessary and valuable addition for work production. But, if not properly trained, jobs can put many youths at risk for injuries at work. Employers play a key role in creating a safe work environment and preventing injuries to young workers. As an employer, you need to know and comply with the child labor laws that apply to your business.

Employers must be aware of their responsibility to protect the youth they employ and to understand the potential for tragedy if laws are not followed. At minimum, you're required to provide a safe and healthful workplace, training in work related health and safety including information on chemicals that could be harmful to health, and appropriate protective clothing or equipment. Look for and eliminate hazards to teens. Check the equipment they use to be sure its legal and safe. With certain exceptions, youth under 18 who take a job must have a work permit issued by the school district.



Discuss with your young workers the importance of workplace safety, including:

- participation in training programs
- proper supervision and detailed instruction
- awareness of their physical limitations
- informing their supervisor when doing a task for the first time
- encouraging questions and reporting hazards to supervisors
- providing warning signs on equipment not authorized for their use

Employers should be aware of the restrictions to youths of specific ages regarding certain types of general work. A safe workplace for young workers doesn't happen by accident. It happens because of good training. Train your young workers to recognize hazards. Make sure they follow safe practices.

The website, <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~safejobs/index.html>, serves as a California Resource Network for Young Workers' Health and Safety. For federal regulations, which may differ from the state regulations, contact the Wage and Hour District Office of the U.S. Department of Labor. □

Attitude Is Everything For Safety

Creating a safety attitude in the workplace takes the effort of both employers and workers. An employer is responsible for the safety of the worker, but each worker is responsible for applying the safety device or principle to the job. When employers treat workers with respect and show concern for worker safety by enlisting their opinions and implementing their suggestions, improved safety performance results.

If employers talk to and listen to their workers they can learn what motivates workers or prevents them from doing a task safely. Let workers tell you why someone would compromise or bypass a prescribed safety practice. Because worker responsibility and ownership for safety is critical to developing a safety attitude, ask the workers for possible solutions. If the safety solution is their idea, they're more likely to put it into practice.

You can instruct workers in how to perform a job safely, but it's the worker who must find personal value in the instruction and commit to putting safety performance into practice when the instruction is over and the worker is back on the job. It's not just the safety actions but also the safety attitude of the worker an employer must affect to have a lasting impact on job safety performance. □

Continued from previous page

IIPP meets Cal/OSHA requirements.

The IIPP Builder – which requires either Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher or Adobe Acrobat 5.0 or higher – is available exclusively to our policyholders through State Fund Online (a free online resource tool that allows you to quickly and easily manage your policy round-the-clock). If you're not currently a State Fund Online user, register now at www.scif.com and begin building your IIPP today.

State Fund recognizes that an employer's loss control efforts help to decrease the frequency and severity of illnesses and injuries in the work environment. We are committed to the belief that a safe

workplace can increase productivity and lower workers' compensation costs and are proud of our role in helping you develop and enhance your safety programs.

For questions about the IIPP Builder, contact your State Fund Loss Control Consultant, call State Fund Online Support at 1-866-721-3498, or email us at iipp@scif.com. The IIPP Builder is just one of many products State Fund has developed to help you control costs as well as lower employee work-related injuries and illnesses. To find out about additional products and services available to State Fund policyholders, visit www.scif.com. □

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Two, 2008



Personal Safety

Everyday activities like driving to work, walking down the street, or having contact with other people have some personal safety risks. And, although you can't avoid all risks, you can think about and plan for how you'd respond to potential emergency situations. The best approach is to assess the risks involved with an activity and take the logical safety measures required.

When leaving the office, notify someone where you will be and when you will return. Plan

your route and take a map. Have your keys ready and look inside your car before getting in. Keep car doors locked and windows rolled up while you are driving. When driving, consider where you'd steer if there was an oncoming car or an accident. Never pick up hitchhikers, and report accidents or stranded cars from a phone instead of stopping at the scene. Park in well-lit areas and check the surroundings before getting out.

On the street, keep to the inside of the sidewalk. Try to walk facing the oncoming traffic to watch for careening cars and prevent someone from pulling you into one. If you carry a purse or bag, be

prepared to let it go if it is grabbed. Don't wear headphones while walking – you won't hear someone approaching you. Self defense and safety awareness classes may help you feel more secure when you are out and about.



If you are physically assaulted, know that there is no "right" way to respond. You will need to assess your abilities and the situation, and then determine your best course of action. Sometimes, resistance and a shout for help are

enough to discourage an attacker. You can try to talk the attacker out of committing the crime or you can submit and try to escape later. You should know that you have the right to reasonably defend yourself with whatever is at hand – but carrying offensive weapons is against the law.

Your best safety tools are your brain and common sense. Listen to your intuition and follow your safety instincts. Don't be afraid to be impolite, and never stay in an uncomfortable situation. Preparation before an emergency can keep you calm and help you make the right choices. □

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations



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 Trades & Services

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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 Trades & Services 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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