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Edition

GOLDEN STATE GSBE BUILDERS EXCHANGES

8789 Auburn Folsom Road, Suite C-327, Granite Bay, CA 95746
Phone (916) 486-9881
Toll Free (888) GSBE4WC
Fax (916) 486-9884
www.gsbe.net

GSBE's News to Use

Fireworks Safety Recommendations

To help consumers use fireworks more safely, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) offers these recommendations:

- Do not allow young children to play with fire-works under any circumstances. Sparklers, considered by many the ideal "safe" firework for the young, burn at very high temperatures and can easily ignite clothing. Children cannot understand the danger involved and cannot act appropriately in case of emergency.
- Older children should only be permitted to use fireworks under close adult supervision. Do not allow any running or horseplay.
- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from houses, dry leaves or grass and flammable materials.
- Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies and for pouring on fireworks that don't go off.
- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water and throw them away.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.
- Keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.
- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place. Check instructions for special storage directions.
- Observe local laws.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework while lighting.
- Don't experiment with homemade fireworks.

Source: http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/012.html

Inside this issue

Heat Illness Prevention: What You Need to Know

Take these four steps to prevent heat illness

1. Training: Train all employees and supervisors about heat illness prevention.
2. Water: Provide enough fresh water so that each employee can drink at least 1 quart per hour, *and encourage them to do so.*
3. Shade: Provide access to shade for at least 5 minutes of rest when an employee believes he or she needs a preventative recovery period. *They should not wait until they feel sick to do so.*
4. Planning: Develop and implement written procedures for complying with the heat illness prevention standard.

Heat illness types and symptoms

Heat stroke, the most serious health problem for workers in hot environments, is caused by the failure of the body's internal mechanism to regulate its core temperature. Sweating stops and the body can no longer rid itself of excess heat. Victims of heat stroke will die unless treated promptly.

Signs include:

- Mental confusion, delirium, loss of consciousness, convulsions or coma;
- A body temperature of 106 degrees Farenheit or higher; and
- Hot, dry skin which may be red, mottled, or bluish.

Heat exhaustion results from loss of fluid through sweating when a worker has failed to drink enough fluids or take in enough salt, or both. The worker with heat exhaustion still sweats, but experiences extreme weakness or fatigue, giddiness, nausea, or headache. The skin is clammy and moist, the complexion pale or flushed, and the body temperature normal or slightly higher.

Heat cramps, painful spasms of the muscles, are caused when workers drink large quantities of water but fail to replace their bodies' salt loss. Tired muscles used for performing the work are usually the ones most susceptible to cramps.

Fainting *(heat syncope)* may be a problem when a worker who is not acclimated to a hot environment simply stands still in the heat.

Heat rash, also known as *prickly heat*, may occur in hot, humid environments where sweat is not easily removed from the surface of the skin by evaporation. Heat rash that is extensive or infected can be so uncomfortable that it inhibits sleep and impedes a worker's performance, or even results in temporary or permanent disability.

Cal/OSHA's Heat Illness Standard: What it Requires

Training

Before employees can work outdoors, employers are required to provide them with heat illness prevention training. This mandatory training for supervisors and employees under the standard includes the following information:

- Environmental and personal risk factors
- Employer's heat illness prevention plan and procedures
- The need to drink water frequently throughout the day
- Importance of acclimatization—allowing the body to adjust gradually to work in high heat
- Types of heat illness and the signs and symptoms
- Necessity of immediately reporting to an employer any signs or symptoms
- Employer's procedures for responding to symptoms
- Employer's procedures for contacting emergency medical services, including alternative modes of transportation
- Employer's procedures for emergency communications, including emergency response procedures such as location, local medical services, and communication alternatives

Adjusting to the heat

One of the training components mentioned above is the importance ofacclimatization, or adjusting to physical activity in hot weather. The body needs time to adapt to increased heat and humidity, especially when one is engaged in heavy physical exertion. Typically, people need four to fourteen days to adjust fully to significant increases in heat. *Cal/OSHA data reveals that most workplace deaths related to heat illness that occurred last year involved new employees who were on the job only one to four days and were unaccustomed to working in hot or humid weather.*

While employers are required to train employees on the importance of acclimatization, it is up to employers to

determine what acclimatization procedures they will use. The best strategy is to allow employees, and especially new ones, to adjust to hot weather by gradually increasing to a full work shift and pace. On very hot days, other good strategies include timing the shift so that more work can be done during the cooler parts of the day, increasing the number of water and rest breaks, and using a "buddy system" so that workers and supervisors can monitor each other. Also, employees should be reminded of the cooling benefits of wearing loose fitting, light-colored clothing and a wide brimmed hat, when it's feasible.

Shade

2005 safety and health data shows that all the surviving victims of heat illness had access to some shade during work periods, lunch, or at breaks. Under Cal/OSHA's standard, an employee working outdoors who wants to cool off must be provided with shade for at least five minutes at a time. Shade for heat illness recovery periods must be accessible to employees at all times. In industries other than agriculture, employers may utilize measures other than shade to provide cooling if they can demonstrate that these alternative measures are at least as effective as shade.

According to the standard, shade means blockage of direct sunlight. Shade is sufficient when objects do not cast a shadow in the shaded area and there is sufficient space for the employee to be comfortable. Shade is not adequate when the temperature in the shaded area prevents cooling. You must avoid sources of shade such as metal sheds or parked cars that are hot from sitting in the sun. Also, tractors and other machinery do not qualify as sources of shade and have the potential to create an even greater hazard.

If you have employees who work outdoors, consider some easy-to-assemble portable sources of shade, such as umbrellas, canopies, or other temporary structures. Buildings, canopies, and trees all can qualify for shade as long as they block the sunlight and are either ventilated or open to air movement.

Water

The third component of the standard requires an employer to provide employees working outdoors one quart of potable, fresh and cool water per person, per hour. In case studies, Cal/OSHA data revealed that, even though drinking water was present at most worksites, 96 percent of those who succumbed to the heat suffered from dehydration. Therefore, it is critical to keep drinking water accessible and remind your workers to drink it frequently.

In addition to encouraging employees to drink water frequently, employers need to be on the lookout for work situations that interfere with access to water—especially during a heat wave. *Water is a key preventative measure against heat illness.*

Written Procedures

The standard requires an employer's heat illness prevention procedures to be in writing and made available to employees and to representatives of Cal/OSHA upon request. These written procedures must include:

- How an employer will comply with the Heat Illness Prevention Standard requirements
- How to respond to symptoms of possible heat illness, including how emergency medical services will be provided
- How to contact emergency medical services, and if necessary, how employees will be transported to a point where they can be reached by an emergency medical service provider
- How they will ensure that, in the event of an emergency, clear and precise directions to the work site can and will be provided as needed to emergency responders

Employers are encouraged to integrate their heat illness prevention procedures into their Injury and Illness Prevention Programs (IIPPs).

Create a safe, healthy & productive workplace

All the elements of the Heat Illness Prevention Standard must be implemented to prevent serious illness to your workers. By protecting your employees from heat illness, you promote a healthier and more productive workplace.

To learn more about the Heat Illness Prevention Standard, visit *www.dir.ca.gov.*

Fire Prevention Plans: Don't Get Burned

There are some 100,000 workplace fires every year in the United States, resulting in losses in the billions of dollars. And the human toll is high as well. The National Safety Council estimates that fires and burns account for 3 percent of all occupational fatalities.

Because of the substantial risks and costs associated with workplace fires, OSHA requires you to have a fire prevention plan (29 CFR 1910.39) that incorporates:

- A list of the major workplace fire hazards, proper handling and storage procedures for hazardous materials, potential ignition sources and their control, and the type of fire protection equipment needed to control each major hazard
- Names and job titles of employees responsible for maintaining equipment installed to prevent or control sources of ignition and fires
- Names and job titles of employees responsible for controlling fuel source hazards
- Procedures for controlling accumulations of flammable and combustible waste materials
- Procedures for regular maintenance of safeguards installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent the accidental ignition of combustible materials

OSHA also recommends that you include key elements from your emergency action plan (29 CFR 1910.38) in your fire prevention plan, such as:

- Emergency evacuation procedures and exit route assignments
- Procedures for employees who must stay behind to maintain or curtail critical operations before evacuation
- Procedures for counting heads after evacuation is complete
- Rescue and medical duties for those assigned to perform them
- Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency
- Names and job titles of employees who can dispense information about the emergency action plan

Your written fire prevention plan must be made available to employees for review, unless you have 10 or fewer employees in a facility, in which case, you can communicate the plan orally

Additional Considerations

Liability. Fire prevention plans make sense, on a pragmatic level, for controlling potential liability. The death of a worker from a fire or emergency-related cause in the workplace can subject companies to federal prosecution if OSHA standards were not met. When OSHA conducts workplace inspections, it checks to see if employers are complying with fire safety standards. Preventing fire-related deaths in the workplace can be as simple as properly marking fire exit locations, periodically testing fire-extinguishing and alarm systems, and developing effective evacuation plans. To better protect your organization from liability, have an attorney look over your emergency action plan and fire prevention plan to verify completeness in addressing compliance issues.

Unions. Before any drastic changes to a fire prevention or emergency action plan are implemented, they must be discussed with union representatives. The safety of employees is a mandatory bargaining issue, and any unilateral change to an evacuation procedure will need to be discussed before its implementation.

Shiftworkers. All employees have to be able to move quickly and appropriately if there is an emergency situation. To achieve this end, you must conduct emergency training and fire drills for workers on all shifts. This includes scheduling fire drills on each shift. Every employee must have the opportunity to actually hear what the fire alarm sounds like and to participate in drills.

Your fire prevention plan is one very important piece of a comprehensive fire prevention policy that brings together all the elements of workplace fire prevention from planning to implementation.

Source: Safety.BLR.com

Cal/OSHA Guidance for Employers and Employees Regarding Recent H1N1 (Swine Flu) Cases

UPDATED June 15, 2009—In April, a novel type A influenza virus, H1N1 (swine flu) emerged as a significant disease in Mexico. Laboratory- confirmed cases have now been found in more than 70 countries. There have been 45 deaths related to this infection in the U.S., with six reported in California.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have confirmed 17,855 cases in the U.S. including 1,094 cases in California. These numbers do not include all outpatient cases, since public health agencies are no longer requesting that healthcare providers test most patients suspected of being infected with this H1N1 swine origin influenza A virus (S-OIV) and are focusing testing on hospitalized patients, healthcare workers, and other patients of epidemiologic interest. The World Health Organization has determined that this virus has shown "sustained" human to human transmission and has upgraded the pandemic alert level to 6 on a scale of 6. A Phase 6 designation indicates that a global pandemic is underway. (A pandemic is an infectious disease outbreak that affects many countries.) A national public health emergency has been declared. This emergency declaration allows state and local governments access to national resources, such as stockpiled drugs, medical equipment, and personal protective equipment. There is currently no vaccine to protect against this virus. Therefore it is important that other preventive measures be used to protect employees.

Although it is still unclear as to how severe this disease will become, and whether this disease will be widespread, all California employers are encouraged to review their strategies for protecting the health of their employees, including their pandemic flu or other emergency plans. Employers should take this opportunity to update their plans and to train their employees. Local health departments can provide up-to-date local information and resources. Employers whose employees have significant public contact should review their procedures for reducing risks.

Federal OSHA has added several documents to their website which provide specific advice regarding H1N1 and pandemic influenza. These can be found at www.osha.gov, under the heading "In Focus." Additional information on how businesses can plan for pandemic flu can be found at: www.osha.gov/Publications/nfluenza_pandemic.html

Source: www.osha.gov

Noisy, Yes—But Unsafe, Too?

Noise isn't just loud and annoying on the job. It can be a safety and health problem as well—a problem OSHA requires you to do something about.

Understanding and applying OSHA standards is at the heart of any safety and health program. When the safety issue is hearing conservation, the standard you need to understand and comply with is the Occupational Noise Exposure Standard (29 CFR 1910.95).

The hearing conservation section of OSHA's noise exposure standard requires you to establish "a continuing effective hearing conservation program" if your facility generates high noise levels, that is, levels exceeding 85 decibels (dB) on an 8-hour time-weighted average.

For reference, the noise volume in a typical office is about 70-75 dB. A sander emits about 85 dB, factory noise is 80-90 dB, and the sound of a pneumatic drill is about 100 dB. By way of comparison, a whisper is about 10 dB, and a car horn is 120 dB.

An Invisible Risk

Unlike a solvent or a sharp object, the risk posed by noise can't be seen, which leads some employers and employees to underestimate its importance. In most

cases, noise-related hearing loss occurs gradually, starting with a temporary loss that over time can become permanent. Employees with noise-induced hearing loss may not even become aware of the problem until it has reached serious levels, and by that time, the loss can be permanent.

An overly noisy environment can have serious effects on a worker's ability to communicate as well. Experts say that communicating in noise levels above 85 dB is not satisfactory for the speaker or for the listener. Noise can also mask acoustic warning signals and the sounds of improperly functioning equipment. And that can be a big safety problem.

Excessive noise can negatively affect job performance as well. While routine tasks are not usually affected, complex tasks are, especially as the noise gets louder. Intermittent, unpredictable noise is especially detrimental to optimal functioning.

Although the research is somewhat controversial, there is some evidence of a link between noise exposure and stress diseases such as cardiovascular disorders and ulcers. And some studies have shown that even fairly moderate levels of noise can raise anxiety and increase the risk of antisocial behavior.

There's also evidence that workers are less fatigued, less irritable, and sleep better when they're part of a hearing conservation program. They appear to have fewer accidents and absences, too.

Noise Reduction Strategies

Noise can be reduced in a work area through a variety of strategies. Among them are:

- Separating noisy machinery or operations from the rest of the facility
- Keeping equipment well-maintained and lubricated so it doesn't rattle or squeak
- Replacing worn or loose machine parts
- Using substances like wood or plastic instead of metal, when possible
- Using sound-absorbing acoustical tiles on the floor, ceiling, or walls
- Taking noise levels into consideration when buying new equipment
- Trying to perform noisy maintenance tasks after hours

Hearing Protection

When noise can't be reduced to safe levels, the standard requires employees to wear appropriate hearing protection. There are three categories of protectors:

- **Earmuffs** usually provide the greatest amount of protection to the ears. They consist of a headband, ear cups, and ear cushions.
- **Earplugs** seal the ear canal and keep noise from getting through to the ear's delicate parts. There are many different ones on the market. Some come in standard sizes, while others are custom-fitted to the ear.
- **Canal caps** are soft pads on the ends of a headband, similar to headphones. The caps, which must fit snugly, seal the entrance to the ear canal rather than entering it, as earplugs do.

In some particularly noisy environments, employees may need to wear more than one kind of protector (for example, plugs and muffs).

Source: Safety.BLR.com

New Effective Date for Energy Efficiency Standards

The effective date for the 2008 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Title 24, Parts 1 and 6) has been changed to January 1, 2010.

The California Energy Commission adopted the 2008 Standards on April 23, 2008, and the Building Standards Commission approved them on September 11, 2008. The Standards were scheduled to become effective on August 1, 2009.

The Energy Commission has experienced delays in completing the public domain compliance software. The Energy Commission had anticipated that these software programs would be available earlier, however the software required further programming attention before the programs could be released. The Energy Commission is resolving those problems, and will provide the programs in the near future.

This delay provides the industry and building officials more time to prepare for the new Standards. The Energy Commission will use this additional time to provide more information for the Standards and work with the California utilities, building industry and the California Building Officials to provide training on the new Standards.

For more information:

http://www.energy.ca.gov/title24/2008standards/notices/2009-06-29_notice_effective_date.html

Fireworks photos provided by Gruccis of New York
www.grucci.com