

# Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Two, 2009



## Prevent Heat-Related Illness

**W**orking in high-heat conditions can have dangerous health effects on those who are unprepared. Exposure to high temperatures for long periods of time can increase the chance of illnesses such as sunburn, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or heat cramps. These illnesses can range from mild to severe and sometimes can result in death. Knowing what to do to prepare for and prevent these heat-related illnesses is better than having to treat them.

To work comfortably and avoid getting overheated, check the day's weather and make sure you're properly dressed for the predicted conditions. Wear a hat, appropriate loose-weave cotton clothing that covers your exposed skin and lightweight protective gear. Protect any exposed skin and your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays by using sunscreen and wearing sunglasses.

Know where drinking water or other cold drinks are located. Drink about two glasses of water before beginning work and continue to drink water during and afterward work to replace fluids you'll lose through sweating. Increase your intake of fluids (one to two quarts per hour) during high temperatures, especially when temperatures are above 100 degrees

Fahrenheit and during periods of unusually high humidity. Avoid alcohol, it adds to dehydration and increases your risk of a heat-related illness.

Stay alert for early symptoms of excessive exposure to heat and let your supervisor know if you're feeling ill, weak, or faint. Make sure there are other qualified persons available who can recognize and give you first aid if you do become ill. Know how to respond or quickly contact medical help if you notice a coworker showing signs of heat illness.



Supervisors can do their part in heat illness prevention by checking the day's temperatures and managing the work activities accordingly – setting up rest breaks in shaded areas, rotating tasks, scheduling heavy work for cooler hours, and postponing non-essential tasks during

heat spells. They should monitor the condition of workers; do they show signs of illness or drug or alcohol use? Older workers or those who are obese, pregnant, or take prescribed medication are at greater risk for heat-related illnesses.

Working in high-heat conditions can be done safely, if you're prepared by dressing correctly, staying hydrated, taking breaks, and recognizing signs of over-heating.

### TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Safety Recommendations

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Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

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News about Occupational Safety and Health in Agriculture

Issue Two, 2009

## 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](http://www.scif.com) and click on Seminars. □

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## 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 Agricultural 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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# Safety News



ISSUE TWO, 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

## Protect Your Multi-Lingual Workers

**A**re you getting important safety training messages and workplace communications across to your limited- or non-English speaking workers? From procedures and policies to imperative hazard warnings and emergency instructions, make sure your message is understood by all your workers.

Cal/OSHA requires that employers provide safety training to their workers in a language they can understand. Instruct in your workers' primary language, provide a translator, or translate materials. If you translate or provide training in another language, cover the same materials and amount of detail as your English language training. Use interactive training to get hands-on experience and provide employees a chance to ask questions.

Choosing the appropriate method of communication is essential to getting information across to any worker, but a multilingual workforce poses a challenge. If you're instructing non-English-speaking workers, use methods to make sure they understand you. Give clear, simple verbal instructions and list your instructions in the order that you want them done. Ask workers to repeat instructions back to you. Ask them to demonstrate the technique they've been taught. If the job requires technical terms teach workers what the words mean.

Safety and hazard signs need pictures and words

that everyone can understand. Confirm that all workers understand the signs' directions. If the safety and hazard signs contain only words, translate them in the primary language of your workforce to ensure everyone gets the message.



Workplace documents that must be translated include hazard warning signs, lockout-tagout devices and signs, company safety policies and procedures, equipment manuals, and instruction booklets. Provide material safety data sheets (MSDS) in appropriate languages so your workers know how to properly handle, store, and dispose of chemicals. When you

have materials translated, ask a bilingual reader to review them for mistakes.

For good job site communication, brief all workers on their work location and address. Explain emergency procedures, contact phone numbers, and warning words such as, "fire," "danger," and "look out!" Identify bilingual workers that can serve as interpreters on the job site, during training or act as resources for reviewing written materials. Make sure employees know who is bilingual on the job and encourage them to use interpreters as a communication resource. If you are not sure that a worker understands communication on a job-site, seek out their supervisor or someone that can accurately translate for you. □

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## The Expert's Corner

# Going Green With Office Lighting

In a standard office, lighting accounts for about 60% of a company's electrical costs. Despite recent efforts to make offices more energy efficient, surprisingly the majority are still overlit for computer work. According to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), about 30 foot candles (fc) of surrounding light for monitor viewing are all that is necessary for healthy computer use. Any more than this can create glare and reflections on the monitor screen, which can result in awkward postures and symptoms like headaches, nausea and fatigue in the user. Yet the typical office ranges from 60-100 fc, far more than is recommended, which results in a correspondingly larger consumption of energy as well.

Some simple steps companies can take to both make their lighting environment healthier for employees and to reduce their energy costs:

If your company hasn't done so already, replace all fluorescent fixture ballasts with

high-frequency electronic ballasts and full-spectrum T-8 tubes. This will substantially reduce your energy costs.

Better yet, replace those ballasts with a dimmable type, so that your entire system can be lowered down to the preferred 30 fc range with ease.



Maintaining a balanced overhead lighting system is important, so simply turning off some fixtures or removing certain tubes are not good options, as these can create hot

spots or dark areas and electrical safety hazards. Some systems are wired so that one wall switch controls the center tube in a three-tube fixture. If yours is set up this way, simply turning off this center tube can effectively reduce consumption by a third and result in an overall reduction in illumination of 20-30 fc.

Another simple energy saving technique in warmer weather is to close the blinds on the south and west facing sides of your building before leaving for the weekend. This will minimize the heat gain your HVAC system must overcome when the system comes back up to speed on Monday. □

*Jeff Tiedeman, an Ergonomics Consultant with State Fund, is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP), and a Board-Certified Industrial Ergonomist (CIE). He has done extensive research on specialized topics related to ergonomics, including illumination in the workplace and seating design, and has written articles and spoken at conferences on these subjects.*

## Get A Grip On Hand Weeding Requirements

Are you in compliance with California's regulation banning unnecessary hand weeding activities? The law, which applies to hand thinning and hand hot-capping as well, resulted from farm labor and management's attempt to eliminate prolonged hand weeding activities which may contribute to a high incidence of back and lower extremity injuries in workers.

Although, the law doesn't ban hand weeding altogether, it says that a worker may not weed

in a stooped, kneeling, or squatting position either with a short-handled or long-handled tool. It does, however, permit hand weeding in the following situations:

- If an employer can show that the hand weeding is necessary because there's no readily available, reasonable alternative (e.g. no long-handled tool) suitable and appropriate to the production of the commodity
- If the hand weeding is only occasional or

intermittent and incidental to a non-hand-weeding operation (To be "occasional or intermittent," hand weeding must be limited to 20% of a worker's weekly work time.)

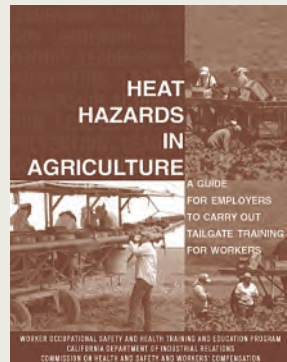
- If the high-density plants are spaced less than 2 inches apart when planted
- If the agricultural or horticultural commodity is grown in fields or greenhouses that have been registered with the County Agricultural Commissioner as organic

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If

# Heat Illness Training Guide Available

In accordance with California law, employers are required to take steps to prevent heat illness at all outdoor worksites. This includes developing and implementing written procedures on heat illness prevention, and providing heat illness training to all employees – especially those who are not proficient in the English language. To assist employers who, under California law, must provide in depth training on the subject for their supervisors and outdoor workers, a comprehensive, easy-to-use booklet was created, *Heat Hazards in Agriculture, A Guide for Employers to Carry Out Tailgate Training for Workers*. Employers are encouraged to obtain a copy of this free guide and use it to train their agricultural workers about how to recognize and prevent heat illness and what to do should a heat illness emergency arise.

Agricultural workers may be at risk for heat illness because they generally spend many hours working outdoors in heated weather conditions, especially during summer months and harvesting times. This guide, with easy-to-follow diagrams, gives life-



saving information that can help employers train their employees about working safely outdoors in the heat and on heat illness prevention. The guide includes:

- A checklist to inspect your worksite and identify possible heat hazards before the training is held
- Complete instructions for teaching workers about heat hazards
- A daily check list of necessary precautions that need to be put in place before work begins
- Information that includes a Cal/OSHA fact sheet with key information about heat illness
- An easy-to-read fact sheet that can easily be copied and distributed to employees

The guide is concise and easy-to-read with graphics that can be universally understood by employees regardless of their native language. The guide is currently available in English and in Spanish, however, future plans include translations in the seven languages commonly spoken in California. You can download the booklet directly from the DIR Web site at [www.dir.ca.gov](http://www.dir.ca.gov) or call (510) 622-3959 to have a copy mailed to you. □

# June is National Safety Month

Accidents and resulting injuries take their toll not only with the tragic price of human suffering but also with the monumental costs of economic capital in lost wages, productivity or property, and in increased medical, administrative, and insurance expenses. In an effort to raise awareness about how to stay healthy and safe both on- and off-the-job, the National Safety Council (NSC) has designated June as National Safety Month.

Each of the four weeks in June focuses on a specific safety topic, which includes some of our nation's most pressing safety risks, according to research. The following link to NSC's website <http://www.nsc.org/NSM/> provides detailed information on each week's activities, along with posters and tip sheets for employers, designed to help develop employee safety recognition.

- **Week 1 – Teen Driving**
- **Week 2 – Falls** (in the workplace and at home)
- **Week 3 – Overexertion** (in the workplace and at home)
- **Week 4 – Distracted Driving** (primarily from cell phone talking and texting)

We hope employers will join with the National Safety Council for this National Safety Month and do their part to reduce the number of accidental injuries and deaths not only for the month of June but for all year...every year. □

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the agricultural or horticultural commodities are seedlings

- If the horticultural commodity is grown in tubs or planter containers with openings not exceeding 15 inches

The law further requires employers to supply gloves and kneepads, as necessary, to their hand-weeding workers and provide job training in accordance with their company Illness and Injury Prevention Program (IIPP) guidelines. Workers doing hand weeding that is not occasional or intermittent must also be given an additional 5 minutes of rest period for every four hours worked.

Cal/OSHA is enforcing this law primarily by investigating complaints. Its interpretation of the regulation's language will determine whether a citation – either general or serious – is warranted. To cite an employer, Cal/OSHA will have to prove that workers were engaged in hand weeding activities in violation of the regulation. And, to avoid fines that could total thousands of dollars, a cited employer must justify that the use of hand weeding, hand thinning or hand hot-capping was required due to the unsuitability of the use of long-handled tools or of other alternate means of performing the work. □

