

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund



Issue Three, 2008

Machine Guards

Year after year machine guarding is among the most frequently cited Cal/OSHA violations. More important than citations are the serious crushing or amputation injuries caused by not having, not using or bypassing machine guards.

If a machine has a part, function or process which can cause injury, it needs a safeguard. But in order for the guard to do its work, you must do your part in respecting and using the guards.

Guards are installed on machinery to protect you and others from injury.

This means that each and every time the machine is in operation, the guards must be in place. A guard must never be bypassed or removed during use. If a guard is removed for machine cleaning or repairing, it must be put back into place before reuse or storage.

Before beginning any work on a machine, check all its moving parts to make sure that guards are securely placed and that equipment is operating properly. Checking the guards should be part of your regular daily inspection. Missing or damaged guards should be reported to your supervisor—whether the equipment belongs in your work area or not.



Make sure you understand and follow lockout/ blockout rules for use, maintenance, and repair of machinery. Don't let breakdowns, jammed work or broken parts cause you to forget safety procedures. Power should be turned off and switches locked and tagged during repair and moving equipment should be blocked to protect against stored energy.

When the repair has been completed, guards must be replaced and checked that they work properly.

Before you use any machine, make sure you've been trained in its safe operation and know to keep your hands away from any moving parts.

Only trained and authorized workers should be allowed to operate machinery. They should be instructed in the proper attire for working around machines including required personal protective equipment. Periodically review safety procedures to make sure workers understand all training and safe operating practices.

Make sure you keep your guard up when working with or around machines by keeping your hands away from moving parts and not tampering with them. Machine guards are really people guards. Let the machine guards do their job of protecting you on the job.

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations



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Loss Control Services

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Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in Manufacturing

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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 Manufacturing 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

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

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Which Way Out?

How would you escape from your workplace in an emergency? Do you know where all the exits are in case your first choice is not accessible? Are you sure the doors will be unlocked and that the exit access will not be blocked during a fire, explosion or other crisis? Knowing the answers to these questions could keep you safe during an emergency.

An “exit route” is a continuous and unobstructed path of exit travel from any point within a workplace to a place of safety. Exit routes should discharge directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge area, public way or open space with access to the outside. These exit routes and discharge areas must support the maximum permitted occupant load for each floor served and be large enough to accommodate the building occupants likely to use the exit route.

Normally, a workplace must have at least two exit routes for prompt emergency evacuation. More than two exits are required if the number of employees, size of the building or arrangement of the workplace will not allow employees to evacuate safely. Exit routes must be a permanent part of the workplace, be separated by fire resistant materials and be located as far away as practical from

each other in case one is blocked by fire or smoke. Employers must install “EXIT” signs in plainly legible letters and provide lighting for exit routes adequate for employees with normal vision. The line-of-sight to an exit sign must be clearly visible at all times. Exit route doors must be unlocked from the inside and unobstructed by materials,

equipment, locked doors or dead-end corridors. They must be kept free of explosives or highly flammable furnishings and other decorations that could obscure the visibility of the exit route and be maintained during construction, repairs or alterations.

Employers must have an established emergency action plan that describes the alarm system to alert building occupants. The

plan should include procedures for reporting fires and other emergencies; procedures for emergency evacuation, including the type of evacuation and exit route assignments; procedures for employees to assist in the evacuation and to account for all employees and procedures for employees performing rescue or first aid.

In an emergency evacuation, every minute counts. So, whenever you enter a building, make a mental note of where the exits are so you can exit quickly and safely. □



The Expert's Corner

Smoke From Wildfires And The Workplace

When smoke from wildfires is in the air, employers may wonder if the smoke is a health hazard and if they can do anything to protect their workers.

Smoke is a complex mixture of gases and fine particles. These fine particles are the primary health concern, but chemicals in the mixture can also contribute to the irritating effects of smoke. Carbon monoxide in the smoke is typically only a concern for firefighters close to the fire line.

Health effects depend upon the level of smoke and the sensitivity of the individual. They can include irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract, cough, phlegm, wheezing, difficulty in breathing, and chest discomfort. People with asthma, lung disease, or heart disease are more likely to be affected by smoke. If workers experience symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue, medical attention should be sought.

Employers should stay alert. They should listen to local news, weather forecasts, and air quality alerts. Air quality advisories and

news can also be found at www.airnow.gov.

Staying indoors is a common advisory. The heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system should be set to maximize the amount of recirculated air and minimize any fresh air being brought in. Portable room air cleaners can provide additional air



filtration. Some buildings are so “leaky” that the inside air is no better than the outside air. Other buildings may lack air conditioning and become too hot with all the windows and doors kept shut. If the inside environment is unacceptable, it may be appropriate for some or all employees to remain at home or at some alternate location.

Reducing physical activity may be recommended. Employers should review the level of physical exertion needed for all operations and limit or stop some activities if appropriate.

Air contaminants generated within the workplace can be a concern. If open doors and windows or mechanical ventilation with make-up air from outside are needed to reduce exposure to air contaminants from forklifts, welding, or other processes, it may be appropriate to limit or even stop some operations.

In general, the use of respirators or masks is not recommended for widespread use in areas affected by smoke. However, their use may be appropriate for some workers, such as those who need to be outdoors. Consult a safety and health professional before providing respirators for your employees. □

Beth Mohr, Ph.D., CIH, is a Certified Industrial Hygienist assigned to State Fund's San Francisco and San Jose Districts.

Keep Up The Good (Pallet Jack) Work

Electric pallet jacks make quick work of moving loads around the workplace. Pallet jacks protect your back from strains and injuries by moving heavy and awkward loads and objects that would be unsafe to lift manually. But, as with any powered tool, if used improperly, electric pallet jacks can become a safety liability.

Only operate the pallet jack if you have been trained and authorized to do so by your employer.

Be familiar with the electric pallet jack that you will use on the job. Review the manufacturer's operating instructions and details on the jack's capacity. A lift rating capacity plate should be mounted on the jack; never exceed the manufacturer's load rated capacity. Know how to use the power controls and brakes properly. Use the forks and attachments correctly. Always inspect the equipment prior to each use; never operate an electric pallet jack if it is malfunctioning. When charging the jack, use a GFCI outlet and ensure that you

use precautions to avoid electric shock.

Learn and follow the general safety rules for electric pallet jack use. Load the jack securely to prevent materials from shifting during movement. Gradually start and stop the jack to prevent the load from slipping. Use caution when moving the jack; ensure that your pathway is clear and that you will not run into obstacles. Keep your body and your coworkers clear of the pallet jack to avoid

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Guard Electric Equipment And Workspaces

Electrical current is found in power lines, transformers, breaker boxes, and power outlets and switches. Exposure to electric current can cause shock, injury and electrocution. Proper guarding and clearance around electrical equipment can prevent accidental worker exposure to electrical currents.

To avoid the risk of accidental shock, live electrical components operating at 50 volts or more must be guarded with covers or other permanent barriers to prevent accidental contact by workers and their tools. Equipment can also be locked behind an enclosure, in a room, or at an elevated height. These areas should have restricted access and warnings against unauthorized entry. Permanent markings on electrical equipment with the voltage, current or wattage provide power output information for workers.

Electrical boxes and equipment are best stored in areas free from moisture, chemicals, and excessive temperatures. Electric cabinets with ventilation holes need to remain clear to allow air circulation. Electric parts that ordinarily spark or arc require covers and isolation from



combustion sources. Equipment should be securely mounted to the surface that it rests on.

There should be adequate working space to allow workers to safely maneuver around electrical equipment. Electrical equipment with a voltage of 0-150 requires 36 inches of clearance. A voltage of 151-600,

where there are energized parts on one side, also needs 36 inches of clearance. Equipment with a voltage of 151-600 and exposed energized parts on one side and grounded parts on the other side requires 42 inches clearance; equipment with exposed energized parts on both sides of the workspace must have 48 inches clearance.

The clearance workspace around electrical equipment

is not intended for storage. The area should be kept clear to allow safe movement and to prevent a fire hazard. Electric equipment workspaces require adequate lighting for safe work; light operating switches should not be near live electrical feeds. Enclosures need at least one entrance and enough headroom to work safely.

With adequate clearance and guarding around electrical equipment, workers can avoid accidental exposure to electric shock. □

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being crushed by the machine. Never ride on a pallet jack and avoid horseplay when you are using one.

Watch for coworkers and obstacles at all times when you are using an electric pallet jack. Slow down and proceed cautiously when you are at a crosswalk or obscured throughway in the workplace. Try to stack and move loads in a manner that will not block your line of vision. Always use a spot-

ter to assist you if you cannot see around the load. Use extra caution in narrow aisles, on slopes and inclines, and other restricted areas where your maneuverability will be limited. If you are authorized to use the jack in an elevator, always enter it with the load first; do not back up into the elevator. Use the same technique when entering any constricted space with a pallet jack. Ensure that trucks and railcars that you are authorized to enter are properly blocked from movement. □

Don't Stand For Problems

Workers who stand for long periods of time can often experience muscle fatigue, low back pain, neck and shoulder stiffness and sore or swollen feet and legs. But, because some jobs require workers to maintain a standing posture, there are some ways to prevent or ease potentially negative physical conditions. Encourage workers to:

- Do some gentle stretching exercises before beginning work to warm and loosen muscles
- Face the work area and keep the task close to the body
- Organize work so it's within easy reach; avoid extreme bending, stretching and twisting
- Adjust the height of the work area; elbow height is most comfortable
- Stand on rubber, cork or wooden surfaces rather than on concrete or metal floors
- Use a footrest or footrail to shift body weight from one leg to another to take pressure off the lower back
- Change working positions periodically
- Relax shoulder and arm muscles when they become tense or stiff

It's important for workers to use their rest periods to relax or exercise other muscles. And, when returning to work after a vacation or illness, workers should give their body a change to readjust to the standing activities their job requires. □

