

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund



Issue Two, 2009

Workplace Distractions

Work interruptions and distraction can result in performance errors, injuries, or lost productivity. Although there are some workplace distractions or interruptions may be unavoidable others can be controlled or regulated.

Avoid interrupting other workers during a critical job phase or process. When possible, refer to onsite instruction manuals and procedural guidebooks. If you must interrupt other workers, make them aware of your presence so that you don't startle them and cause an injury. Before responding to another worker, shut down or disengage the work tool, equipment, or processes.

Electronic devices such as cell phones, IPODS, and PDAs can be the source of serious distractions in some work environments. Check with your supervisor to find out if these devices are allowed where you work. If approved in your workplace, keep your cell phone on a low volume or silent when you work. To maximize work safety and performance, turn email notifications off and disable instant messaging.

For some workers wearing a headset with low volume music can be relaxing and help to focus on a task. However, wearing headphones in an industrial site can be dangerous if it prevents you from hearing warning signals, mobile equipment backup alarms, and safety instructions. Walking around while talking on the phone or wearing a headset can distract your attention from

safety and could result in a slip or fall or cause you to run into or be struck by something or someone.



Where loud or constant noise from tools and equipment is unavoidable, hearing protection devices can eliminate or decrease unwanted and distracting noise. In other work environments even not-so-loud sounds can be a distracting annoyance. Constantly ringing phones, conversations, and loud faxes, copiers, and printers can distract workers from their job tasks or – depending on the level or duration of the noise – can contribute to workplace stress. Don't answer the phone or emails when you're in the middle of a task – let it ring to voicemail then check messages later – preferably on your break time.

Workplace distractions and interruptions are common, but remember to keep your mind on the task at hand. Tell your supervisor about repeated and/or unsafe distractions and take responsibility for not interrupting or distracting others. □

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations





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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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ISSUE TWO, 2009

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

Prevent Indoor Heat Illness

Heat illness is not limited to those who work outside. It can also affect workers inside buildings with limited cooling capabilities and those who work near sources of heat. How can you protect your indoor workers from developing heat illness? There are some basic things employers should do.

The best heat illness prevention measures are: to have your company's written Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) identify and evaluate work areas at risk and describe appropriate corrective measures; to train workers and their supervisors in heat illness prevention, recognition, and emergency response procedures; to give workers access to water and cool rest areas, to allow for acclimatization, and; and to continually monitor weather and indoor temperatures.

Cal/OSHA has created a handout, *Cal/OSHA Heat Illness Prevention for Indoor Working Environments*, to raise awareness about indoor heat illness among employers and workers with the goal of reducing heat illness cases. It lists "5 Must-Train preventive steps":

- Frequent drinking of water
- Rest in cooler areas
- Give time to acclimatize
- Know signs and symptoms
- Know emergency steps

The handout also details crucial elements in heat illness prevention:

Have Written Procedures – Heat illness preventative steps, methods, and procedures must be described in the IIPP including how to conduct worksite evaluations, how conditions or practices will be corrected, and how information will be communicated to workers.

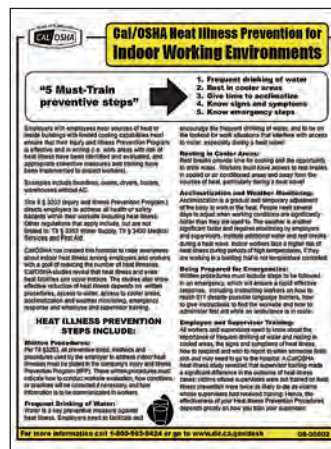
Drink Water Often – Water is critical to preventing heat illness. Employers must facilitate and encourage frequent water drinking, especially in heat waves!

Rest in Cooler Areas – Rest breaks allow time to cool down and drink water. Provide worker access to cooled or air conditioned rest areas away from heat sources.

Providing Acclimatization and Weather Monitoring – Acclimatization allows the body to gradually adjust to work in high-heat environments. Weather monitoring by employers and supervisor is also significant.

Prepare for Emergencies – Written procedures should detail emergency steps which will ensure a rapid effective response, including how to reach 911 despite possible language barriers, giving directions to the worksite, and administering first aid.

Training Employees and Supervisors – The effectiveness of heat illness prevention procedures depends greatly on how you train your employees – especially supervisors – about the importance of frequent water drinking, resting in cool areas, the signs and symptoms of heat illness, and how to respond when someone develops heat illness. □



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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.

Watch Out For Stimulants At Work

If you use energy or caffeinated drinks and supplements or prescription and recreational drugs to boost your mental or physical energy at work, you should do so with caution. Stimulants can affect your job safety.

Caffeine is the most common stimulant. In moderation, it can increase energy, but it can affect people differently. If you overuse caffeine, you can feel nervous and irritable, anxious, and get an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia). You may have difficulty con-

centrating and sleeping, leading to mistakes on the job. You may miss your body's signals that it is tired and you should slow down, leading to strains, sprains and injuries. Because caffeine is a diuretic, it can cause frequent urination, dehydration, and heat illness, if you are exposed to hot work environments or heavy exercise. You should know your caffeine tolerance.

Energy drinks are another popular sources of caffeine. Overuse of a high caffeine content energy drink can lead to dehydration,

nausea, vomiting, and heart irregularities. Never mix an energy drinks with alcohol; the combination can mask the effects of alcohol, causing you to over-indulge. Energy drinks may contain other additives like amino acids, carbohydrates (sugars), vitamins, and herbs that can have their own side effects. Read product labels to get the ingredients, potential side effects, and directions on amounts you can drink in a day.

Continued on next page

Does Safety Fit The (Plastic) Mold?

Plastic molding industry involves powered machines such as rollers, presses, compression plates, heat sealers, and cutting knives to form plastic products. The moving, rotating, cutting and hot equipment you use in plastic molding poses safety hazards. Get specific training on your job tasks and the equipment and materials you use. Learn the mechanical hazards of each machine you use.



and restraint devices physically restrain the operator's hands from entering the hazard area. These devices should be carefully adjusted to ensure they restrain hands to a safe distance. If there are multiple operators using a machine, each operator should have one of the above safety controls securely attached to them. Note that hand feeding tools can be used to place and remove materials in presses

To control the risks of machine injuries, use guarding to cover and protect the nip points, pinch points, and points of operation. All of these areas are hazardous and pose severe injury and amputation risks. Label each machine with the hazard point(s) and type(s). In addition, guard and protect heated surfaces to prevent burns or use heat-resistant gloves or clothing to protect yourself if you must work near heated surfaces.

Cal/OSHA also has guarding requirements for thermo-setting plastic molding presses and other point of operation hazards on machinery that include gates and barriers to prevent a hand or body part entering the hazard zone. Pull-out, hold out,

and other machines, but they should not be considered guards or used in place of guards or other safety controls.

Carefully inspect machines before you use them and take them out of service if they're not operating properly. Use lockout/blockout procedures before you perform maintenance, lubrication, or clear a machine jam. If you must remove a guard for maintenance or inspection, replace it before you operate the machine.

Work in a well-lit area and practice good housekeeping. Clean up dust, scraps, and spills of plastic materials that can pose slip or trip hazards. □

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There are energy supplements available in pill or tablet form that contain caffeine, sugar, herbs and vitamins. These are advertised to boost strength, alertness, energy, and/or weight loss but they too can have mild to serious side effects from the caffeine, individual ingredients, or combinations. Read supplement labels for ingredients, use, and dose directions.

Some prescription medications and recreational (illegal) drugs like cocaine, ecstasy, and amphetamines can cause users to feel a temporary surge of energy, activity, and alertness. Don't take recre-

ational drugs (or consume alcohol) before or during work hours. Overuse of any drug stimulant can lead to addiction and severe physical and mental symptoms. Because drugs alter your reaction time, ability to reason, and alertness, they can lead to serious mistakes and accidents.

Control the amounts of stimulant drinks and supplements you use. If you use prescription drugs, follow the directions and dose information. Don't drive or operate machinery if you are feeling the effects of stimulant overuse. Know the signs and symptoms of overuse in yourself and coworkers. □

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. □

