

# Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Two, 2008



## Eye Safety

In the blink of an eye, if you're not properly protected, you could suffer a serious eye injury or be blinded.

Most workers who've had an eye injury wore no eye protection and of those who did, most wore the wrong kind. Protect your eyes from injury by following all safety instruction, correctly wearing and caring for your eye protection equipment, and seeing your optometrist for regular eye health exams.

Prevention is the best way to avoid an eye injury. Read the safety instructions for any tool, equipment or product before you use it. Then follow the precautions and wear the recommended eye protection. Warning signs should be placed near machines, equipment or process areas that require specific eye protection. Anyone working in or passing through areas that pose eye hazards should wear eye protection.

It's a good practice to wash your hands often and keep them away from your eyes. Know the proper first aid response for an eye injury so that you don't cause further damage. In an emergency, know whom to call and where the phone number is located.

There are several common causes for eye injury and in all cases consult an eye care professional to make sure you're treated correctly for the injury.

- Foreign particles such as dust, dirt, metal, wood chips can get into your eye and cause damage; even an eyelash can cause painful eye irritation.
- Bumps and blows to the eyes can cause minor to severe eye injury.
- Cuts in or around the eyes could be very serious and jeopardize vision.



- Chemicals, fumes or hot steam can cause great damage to the eye.
- Light burns or sparks can cause injury that may not be felt until hours later.

Protective eyewear is only effective when it's cared for and worn correctly. If you use protective eyewear, clean and store it properly. Scratched, broken, bent or ill-fitting eyewear should be replaced. Nothing can replace the loss of an eye and a minute is all it takes to destroy your eyesight. That's the same time it takes to make sure that your eyes are properly protected. □

### TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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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 Public Agencies

Issue Two, 2008

## 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 Public Agencies 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, 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

## Have Workers Been Set Up?

**E**rgonomics means fitting the workplace to the worker to prevent physical stress and injury. Because the design of workplace equipment is critical to a worker's performance, a well-adjusted, comfortable workstation that matches the operator's size and movements can increase productivity, heighten morale, and lower workers' compensation costs by reducing injury claims.

Ergonomic improvements don't have to be difficult or costly. Most of the time, inexpensive, minor changes will increase worker comfort – a book to raise the monitor, a box to raise the feet or a change of lighting. For computer work, several elements should be examined: the chair, keyboard, monitor, desk, and tools such as the mouse, document holder, and lighting.

Most people sit at a computer, so the chair height should be adjusted to the desk height. The worker should sit back in the chair with the lower back supported by a lumbar support, pillow or rolled towel and the feet resting firmly on the floor, a footrest or box.

To prevent neck and shoulder strain, the keyboard should be waist-high allowing the upper arms to hang freely at the sides with forearms parallel to the floor and hands and wrists straight

and relaxed. A computer mouse, trackball or stylus pen should be positioned close to the keyboard and at the same height. A keyboard tray, adjusted to compensate for a too-high desk, can be added to hold the keyboard and mouse.



The computer monitor should be approximately at arm's length with the screen near but not higher than eye level. This will vary based on the individual's visual requirements. A book or stand can raise the monitor. The document holder should be at the same height and distance as the screen to minimize head movement and eye, neck and

shoulder strain. Light from overhead, a window or task lamp should be adjusted to reduce glare. It might be necessary to tilt the screen or angle it away from the window; a window shade, glare screen or screen hood may be added.

Workers can reduce the risk of injury by becoming aware of what they do, how they do it, and how long they do it. They should be reminded to periodically look away from the screen, blink frequently, take micro breaks or get out of the chair and stretch to reduce static postures and eyestrain. Ergonomically speaking, set workers up for comfort, not for injury. □

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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

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# Asphalt Safety

**A**sphalt is used for paving roads, roofing, concrete work, and in paints. It's often mixed with solvents, binders, hardening and bonding agents, crushed rock or recycled rubber and can be heated up to 200 degrees Fahrenheit. Before you work with asphalt, get training in its health and safety hazards and then follow safe work practices.

When working with asphalt, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as a long sleeved shirt and long pants or overalls. Wear thermally insulated gloves to prevent burns from hot asphalt or solvent chemicals. A pair of safety glasses and a face shield can guard your eyes and face while safety boots can protect your feet.

Breathing asphalt fumes is the most common method of exposure and can result in a headache, skin rash, fatigue, eye and throat irritation or a cough. Avoid breathing asphalt fumes by staying upwind of application areas and enclosing kettles and mixing operations. Exposure to asphalt fumes and the solvents in them over long periods of time may cause more serious health effects, so respiratory protection may be recommended.

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and to determine if your 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](http://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 envi-

ronment. Many forms of asphalt and the solvents mixed with them can be very offensive, flammable, and increase potential hazards like fires or explosions. Avoid putting your head over an open tank or kettle and avoid open stirring to prevent getting burned or overexposed to fumes. Never let water splash into hot asphalt because it can bubble up explosively. Don't smoke around flammable vapors and avoid heat and sparks around your asphalt work. Do not weld an asphalt tank or kettle unless you're certain that it doesn't contain flammable vapors. Always have a correctly rated fire extinguisher readily available in case of a fire, but only use it if you've been trained to do so.

To get health and safety information about the asphalt and ingredients you use, check the product labels or material safety data sheets (MSDS). If you feel ill while working with asphalt, let your supervisor know immediately.

For more information and updates visit the website maintained by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration at <http://www.osha-slc.gov/SLTC/asphaltfumes/>. □

ronment. 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](mailto: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](http://www.scif.com). □

# Call Before You Dig

Excavations are performed daily throughout California and most are done safely and responsibly by companies that are aware of the vast underground network of pipes and cables that provide customers with natural gas, electricity, water, sewage, telecommunications, crude oil, and other vital products and services. A critical step in preventing damage to that network and injury to individuals is the one-call Underground Service Alert (USA) system.

A call to USA triggers notification of its members who have underground facilities at the excavation site and provides the excavator with an "inquiry identification number". Digging without an inquiry identification number is illegal in California (Government Code Section 4216) and can result in fines and the cost of all damages, not only to the owner and operator of the underground facility, but also to any third party. An emergency situation does not relieve the excavator of damage-ensuing financial responsibilities.

Don't risk incurring a fine or an injury – simply call 811 before you dig. In northern and central California, visit USA at their website – [www.usanorth.org](http://www.usanorth.org). In southern California, visit Dig Alert at their website – [www.digalert.org](http://www.digalert.org).

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