

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Four, 2008



Safety With Solvents

Solvents are so common in many workplaces that workers forget how dangerous they are. A solvent is a substance, usually a liquid that is used to dissolve another substance. Although solvents can be used safely, health problems can result from skin contact with solvents or from inhalation of their vapors. In addition to the health hazards, many solvent vapors are flammable and explosive.

One of the most common health hazards associated with exposure to solvents is dermatitis that can develop from a single or from multiple exposures. Exposure can also result in sensitization to the solvent, which is a delayed allergic reaction that often becomes more severe with subsequent exposures.

One big danger with solvents is that they can cause trouble before you realize what's happening. Depending on the type and concentration of the solvent, exposure effects can range from mild respiratory irritation to severe damage to body organs and systems. In extreme cases, overexposure to solvent vapors can cause respiratory failure and death.

To optimize safety follow these suggestions:

- Know what solvents you're working with.
- Read the labels and the material safety data sheets of the solvents. They list the hazards, health effects, and safe handling procedures.
- Make sure the workspace is properly ventilated.
- Use recommended gloves, eye and face protection, boots, other protective clothing, or barrier creams as required.

- If respiratory equipment is used, make sure it gives appropriate protection for the exposure.
- Take care when pouring solvents from one container to another, as fire or explosions can occur from static electricity buildup.



- Clean up solvent spills promptly.
- Never wash your hands with solvents.
- Never weld, cut, solder or use other sources of ignition where solvents are used.
- Store flammable solvents in well-ventilated areas constructed of fire-resistant materials.
- Ground and bond all tanks and equipment for storage.
- Locate readily accessible fire extinguishers in storage and work areas.

When working with solvents, it's important to know what solvents are being used and what steps should be taken to protect against harmful or dangerous exposures. The preferred methods of hazard control are substitution of a less toxic substance, local exhaust ventilation or enclosure.

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations



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News about Occupational Safety and Health in Public Agencies

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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 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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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

Are You Paying Attention?

When you're distracted or interrupted, your thoughts are temporarily taken away from what you're doing. This lapse in attention could result in a critical work mistake or divert your safety focus and result in an injury or death. Although some distractions and interruptions in the workplace are unavoidable, others can be managed, minimized, or eliminated.

Ringing phones, loud conversations, faxes, copiers, printers, or music is commonly found in many workplaces but they can be distracting to those who are concentrating on a work task. When possible, place these items in common or semi-enclosed areas.

Workers who ask questions often interrupt other workers. Minimize the occurrence of frequently asked questions by keeping procedural manuals and handbooks centrally located and readily available. Or, place a "Do Not Disturb" sign near your work area. If you have a question of someone, notice if they are in a critical phase of a task and wait until they're finished to pose your question. If an immediate answer to a question is unavoidable, stop what you're doing and shut down the power tool, equipment, or processes before you respond. Schedule a set time and

place for discussions in a break room or conference room. If you're having a short, impromptu conversation, keep your voice low or move to a hallway or unoccupied area.



Personal cell phones or electronic devices can be distracting. So, silence personal devices while working or select the low volume or vibration mode. Lower the volume on your musical device; music that's enjoyable and relaxing to you might be annoying and distracting to others. If you're in the middle of a task that takes great concentration, don't answer the phone or text message;

let the device save the message, then check it when you've finished your task. Never talk and walk around while you're on the phone. Talking on the phone takes your focus off possible safety hazards around you; you might absentmindedly walk into the path of a vehicle or slip, trip, or fall down or into operating equipment.

Stay focused on the job at hand. Don't let interruptions distract from your job and your safety. Horseplay in the workplace is not only distracting, it's unprofessional and unsafe. Talk with your supervisor about any distractions that may be preventing you from concentrating on your job and working safely. □

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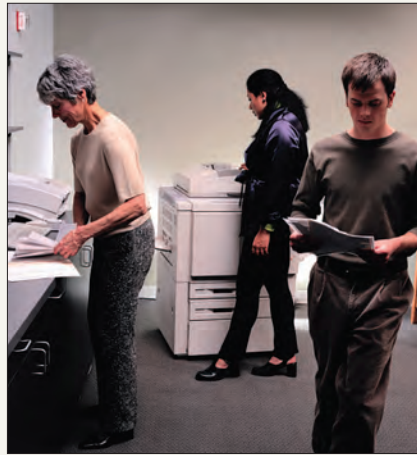
One of the first things to be sacrificed to increased production is good housekeeping – clear aiseways, orderly workstations, and efficient disposal of waste. While it is not uncommon to see these priorities fall by the wayside as a business grows, it is important that they be re-implemented for safety, efficiency, and productivity.

Unclutter the Aisleways

Keeping aisleways clear and clean reduces the risk of injury due to slips, trips, falls, and overexertion. Production waste – such as grease, fibers, sawdust, and other particulates – contributes to the occurrence of slip and fall injuries. Reduced friction between the employee's shoes and walking surface also increases the physical demand of material handling tasks. A regular schedule for cleaning up production waste should be established and monitored.

Larger obstructions – such as boxes and tools – contribute to the occurrence of trip and fall injuries. Such obstructions can cause an employee to take a longer route to

place a load. This increases the duration of the push, pull, or carry exertion, reducing efficiency and productivity and increasing the risk of physical injury. Obstructions closer to the beginning or end of the task may cause the employee to complete it by using an awkward posture – bending forward or twisting at the waist. Handling



a load in these awkward postures increases the risk of low back injury. Make sure that adequate space is provided for storage of inventory and tools and have a supervisor periodically check for obstructed aisleways.

Keep Workstations Clear

Individual workstations should be kept clear and clean to reduce the risk of injury due to extended reaches and other awkward postures. Extended reaches create additional loads on the shoulder and low back. Shadow boards contain outlines of designated tools to show where they should be stored and can be used to maintain efficient placement of tools and equipment within desired reaching zones. Frequently used items should be within 16" and other items within 27".

Reduce Demands of Waste Disposal

Solid garbage cans can create a suction force between the bag and the can. Lifting a bag out of a solid can often causes the worker to handle the load with hands above shoulder height. An open frame receptacle can be used to hold the bag, eliminating the suction force and allowing the bag to be slid out of the side rather than lifted overhead.

Ryan Horton is an Ergonomics Consultant with State Fund. □

Stressed? Don't Let It Get To You

In today's world, we deal with a multitude of stressors, some of which don't go away...the work environment, deadlines, dealing with other workers or the public, personal or financial pressures, uncontrollable world events, etc. When the stress-defense response is continually activated without recovery downtime, it could have negative consequences on the individual or in the workplace. It could result in reduced productivity, lower morale, increased accidents and injuries, personal health problems, or violent

eruptions all of which can affect the safe and efficient operation of a business.

So, how can an employer insure that stress will be positively perceived and directed by employees to the advantage of the business? Make stress awareness part of the employee-training program. Acknowledge that it exists in everyone's life, including the workplace and that individuals vary in their stress thresholds and recovery rates. Let employees know that although some stressors can be

controlled and managed, some stressors cannot be changed. But, also let them know what resources are available to them should their stress become a condition they're unable to manage on their own.

Keep communication lines open by talking to employees. Periodic staff meetings may provide a forum where employees can air their frustrations or share their ideas and

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Get With The (Substance Abuse) Program

Substance abuse in the workplace is expensive – both for the abusers and their employers. Abusers not only jeopardize the safety and health of themselves and others; their substance impairment impacts productivity, customer service, and company profits. A substance abuse problem may start with one individual but the effects can permeate many aspects of the business operation resulting in an inferior product or company image.

The best defense against the problem is to establish and reinforce a substance abuse program that includes at least five elements:

- **A written substance abuse policy** – The policy will send a clear signal to present and future employees about what is expected from them and what will be done if the policy is violated.
- **Supervisory training** – Supervisors are key to the program because they have direct contact with workers. They should understand the policy, be able to identify and help resolve performance problems, and know how to refer workers to available assistance. But, it should be made clear to supervisors that their responsibilities are limited.

- **Employee education and awareness** – A training program should be established to explain the company's policies. It should describe the impact that substance abuse can have on health, safety, productivity, morale, job security, business solvency, and personal relationships.
- **An employee assistance program (EAP)** – EAPs can help employees identify and deal with their problems, through confidential, short-term counseling, referrals and follow-up services.
- **A drug and alcohol testing program** – The drug testing program should be fair, accurate, and legally defensible. It should meet current standards or regulations for the industry and should be the last step of a comprehensive substance abuse program.

Drug and alcohol abuse is a societal problem that may never be completely removed from the workplace, but if employers adopt a proactive drug and alcohol abuse program to address the problem, they may be able to prevent the negative effects on their employees, customers, and business. □

Continued from previous page

perhaps develop stress reduction solutions.

If changes in employee attitudes are observed, talk about what's going on. Keep employees informed of job changes and allow them to participate in decision making, where possible. Make sure your compliments on work practices outnumber your criticisms. It helps if the employee is a good match for the job. Encourage employees to adopt a healthy personal lifestyle including practicing relaxation techniques, establishing good eating habits, monitoring alcohol or drug consumption, exercising, and developing a personal support network.

Stress management is about balance. Balancing stress with relaxation, compliments with criticisms, work with play, problems with rewards, and positives with negatives. Individuals cannot control all the stress producing elements in their environment but they can learn to balance those stresses and control how they respond to them. It's in the best interest of the business to keep employees functioning at their optimum by channeling stress to their -and your- advantage. Negative workplace stress takes a toll on employees and employers but constructively managing it can have significant payoffs to employee productivity and business profitability! □

Training Review...

Employers have a responsibility to train their workers to perform their jobs safely, efficiently, and productively in compliance with applicable safety standards and regulations. And, the beginning of the year is a good time to review that training. For some activities or hazard exposures, annual training is required. A good place to start is to review the company Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP).

An effective training program should inform workers of hazards to which they may be exposed in the course of their work and should cover the employers Code of Safe Practices. The program should also teach them how to reduce or eliminate inefficient or unsafe actions which could result in personal injury or damage to equipment and property.

Make sure workers understand the purpose of the training, why it will be useful to them, and what can result from not following safety rules and procedures. Don't assume because workers attended training and were nodding their heads that the hazards, safety rules or practices presented were understood. Expand your training methods so that it is understandable to all workers regardless of language or level of education.

Tailgate training meetings provide a means to reinforce safety issues at the jobsite. And finally, remember to document all training and place it in the worker's personal file or in the company's training log. □



La seguridad en el manejo de disolventes

Los disolventes son tan comunes en muchos lugares de trabajo que los trabajadores se olvidan de lo peligrosos que pueden resultar. Se entiende por disolvente aquella sustancia, habitualmente líquida, que se utiliza para disolver otra sustancia. Aunque los disolventes pueden utilizarse sin riesgo, pueden provocar problemas de salud al contacto con la piel o al inhalar sus vapores. Aparte de los riesgos para la salud, los vapores de muchos disolventes son inflamables y explosivos.

Uno de los riesgos más comunes para la salud relacionados con el contacto con los disolventes es la dermatitis, la cual puede producirse tras uno o varios contactos. La exposición al disolvente puede provocar la sensibilización hacia éste, es decir, una reacción alérgica diferida que a menudo se agrava con posteriores contactos.

Un gran peligro con los disolventes es que pueden afectar a la persona antes de que ésta se dé cuenta. Dependiendo del tipo y concentración del disolvente, los efectos del contacto van desde entre una leve irritación respiratoria a graves lesiones en los órganos y funciones corporales. En casos extremos, la exposición excesiva a los vapores de un disolvente puede causar insuficiencia respiratoria y la muerte.

Para optimizar la seguridad, siga estas recomendaciones:

- Sepa con qué disolventes está trabajando.
- Lea las etiquetas y las hojas de datos sobre seguridad de materiales de los disolventes. En ellas figuran los riesgos, efectos para la salud y las medidas para su manejo seguro.
- Asegúrese de que el lugar de trabajo se encuentre adecuadamente ventilado.
- Si se recomiendan, use guantes, anteojos y máscara, botas u otra ropa de protección, así como las cremas protectoras que se requieran.

- Si se utilizan equipos de respiración, compruebe que ofrezcan la protección adecuada contra la exposición al disolvente.
- Tenga precaución al verter disolventes de un envase a otro, ya que podrían incendiarse o explotar debido a la acumulación de electricidad estática.
- Limpie rápidamente los derrames de disolvente.
- Nunca debe lavarse las manos con disolvente.



- Nunca se deben hacer trabajos de soldadura, corte, u otras acciones que requieran fuentes de ignición en lugares donde se usen disolventes.
- Almacene los disolventes inflamables en áreas bien ventiladas, fabricadas de materiales pirorresistentes.
- Sujete al piso y afiance todos los tanques y equipos para su almacenamiento.
- Instale extinguidores de incendios en lugares accesibles de las áreas de almacenamiento y trabajo.

Al trabajar con disolventes, es importante saber qué disolventes se están usando y cuáles son las medidas que deben tomarse para protegerse contra las exposiciones peligrosas o nocivas. Los métodos preferidos para el control de riesgos son su sustitución por otras sustancias menos tóxicas, la ventilación por aspiración local y el almacenamiento en envases cerrados.

REVISIÓN DEL TEMA

Instructor _____

Fecha _____

Ubicación _____

Asistente(s) _____

Recomendaciones de seguridad
