

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue One, 2009



Personal Violence Protection

Anyone can become the victim of workplace violence, but certain workers are at a higher risk including those that serve the public, are in health care, social services, and criminal justice settings, or work late nights or early mornings, or work in high crime areas. Workplace violence can be a verbal or physical assault, robbery, rape, or homicide. Be alert to potentially violent situations. Know how to respond appropriately and how to protect yourself from harm.

Take All Threats Seriously. Immediately report any perceived threat or violent incident to your supervisor. If you recognize signs of a potentially violent or disturbed individual, let your supervisor know. If you believe that you are at risk for workplace violence, follow the recommended guidelines to ensure your safety.

When faced with a hostile person, respect their personal space and be aware of your body language, movements, and tone of voice. Stay calm and diffuse the situation. Try to keep a barrier like a desk between yourself and the person, but don't block yourself into a corner. If there is no barrier available, stand at an angle and 4 to 6 feet from the person; this keeps you at arms length and gives you a means to escape. Have plans should a dangerous situation arise; note location of exits and phones.

Respect requirements for restricted

access to the public. Ensure that visitors are screened when entering the workplace and escort them throughout the building. Physical separations like glass walls, partitions, and deep counters can provide distance between you and the public, so use them. Security measures like video cameras, two-way mirrors, and personal or desk panic alarms can help you communicate if you are in distress.



Know and follow the policies for opening and closing your place of business and handling and transporting cash and valuables. If possible, work with a backup employee or enough staff if you will be dealing with a potentially hostile person. Keep potentially offensive weapons like sharp or heavy instruments locked away and out of view or access. Get training on recognizing and reporting the signs of potentially violent individuals and on handling hostile customers and diffusing violent situations. □

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations





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Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

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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Safety News

ISSUE ONE,
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

EMT Safety - First On The Scene

Acting as part of a fire department, ambulance service, or medical facility, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) handle medical transports and respond to emergencies such as fires, accidents, traumas, and psychiatric/drug crises. The urgency and variety of tasks executed in extreme circumstances demand that EMTs work deliberately and safely.

Driving to an emergency can be your most dangerous job task. Dedicate one person to drive and other personnel to handle patient needs. Wear your seatbelt and practice defensive driving by scanning the road ahead for the unexpected.

Protect yourself while helping others. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the task. Long sleeves/pants protect your skin while gloves protect your hands. Safety goggles and a face shield prevent a splash of blood to the eyes, nose or mouth. Cover open wounds and sores while at work. Wash your hands frequently and before you eat, drink or smoke. Decontaminate work surfaces and tools after each response and/or transport.

Providing basic and advanced life support services may expose you to patient blood and bodily fluids and bloodborne diseases such as Hepatitis B or HIV. If you get exposed, flush the area, report the

incident, and get medical treatment immediately, when it is most effective.

Extricating and accessing patients in emergency situations is strenuous work that takes planning and preparation to avoid sustaining a strain or sprain injury. Use backboards, team lifting techniques, and mechanical lift equipment when available. Keep the supply kit close to you to avoid twisting between medical supplies and the patient.



Irregular hours and shifts, life or death situations, and witnessing human suffering can impact your emotions and stress. Potential violence from psychiatric, criminal, and drugged patients is stressful. Also rescuers using and wearing heavy safety equipment take a

physical toll. Prepare your body and mind for this work by maintaining a healthy lifestyle with proper rest, diet and exercise. Schedule sleep and nap periods around your shifts. Get counseling for ongoing stress, and after large-scale or difficult responses.

Medical emergencies call for quick action, but take the time to size up the situation before you respond. Look for and remove hazards before you respond. Do not enter an area without the proper safety equipment. Failure to heed your own safety may prevent you from providing life-saving support to the patient. □

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The Expert's Corner

Tuberculosis – A Continuing Threat

Tuberculosis (TB) is a global epidemic. It's estimated that 2 billion people (or one third of the world's population) are infected with TB and every year, 2 million people die from it.

In the United States, TB control programs have kept the spread of the disease in check. However, the emergence of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR TB) make the goal of eliminating TB in the U.S. especially important.

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease caused by the organism *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It typically affects the lungs, but may also affect other parts of the body. TB is spread from person to person through the air. When a person with infectious TB disease coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings, microscopic droplets containing *M. tuberculosis* may be expelled into the air. These droplets can remain suspended in the air for several hours. Another person inhaling these droplets may become infected with TB. The longer the exposure and the more contagious the diseased person, the more likely the exposed person will become infected.

Most people infected with TB will never develop TB disease – the body's immune system keeps the bacteria under control and inactive. A person infected with TB but who has not developed the disease has a condition called *latent TB infection* (LTBI).



Approximately 10% of people with LTBI will develop TB disease at some point in their lives. For people with weakened immune systems, however, the risk of developing TB disease can greatly increase.

A person with TB disease may have any of these symptoms:

- Persistent cough (3 weeks or longer)
- Bloody sputum
- Weight loss or loss of appetite
- Fever
- Night sweats

Diagnosis and treatment of TB is not only important for the health of the individual. It is also important for preventing the spread of TB within the community.

TB infection control programs should be established for clinics, hospitals, and settings in which home-based health care and emergency medical services are provided. Nursing homes, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, drug treatment centers, and other places that serve clients who are at risk for being infected with TB should also develop TB infection control programs. Information on such programs is available at www.osha.gov. The Center for Disease Control is also an excellent source of information on TB. Visit www.cdc.gov. □

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

Work Healthy In Hospitals

Hospital administrators, custodians, cooks, aides, nurses, and doctors may be exposed to communicable and bloodborne diseases, sharps punctures, chemicals, sprains and strains, stress, and workplace violence on the job. If you work in a hospital, learn about the hazards, get proper training, and follow all safety procedures. And, if you are exposed to a hazard, report it immediately.

Many hospital patients have transmittable

germs, toxic medications, or bloodborne pathogens. Before you begin a new hospital job – at minimum – get a medical screening, a Tuberculosis test, and a Hepatitis B vaccination. To protect against an unhealthy exposure, wash your hands frequently and keep them away from your face, nose, or eyes. Cover open wounds and wear protective clothing such as gloves, a uniform, lab coat, or smock, and shoe guards. Some jobs may require you to change clothes and shoes and shower before leaving work.

Practice good housekeeping by decontaminating surfaces and equipment after use. Employ universal precautions around patients to prevent exposure to bloodborne pathogens like HIV or Hepatitis B or C. Wear splash goggles or face shields to prevent blood or bodily fluid from entering your eyes, mouth, and nose or broken skin. Use safe work practices with soiled linens, wound dressings, or medical waste to prevent

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School Worker Safety

Workers in educational settings including administrators, teachers, aides, secretaries, food service and maintenance workers have both rewarding and challenging jobs. However like many occupations, the environment has some potential risks. But, if you're alert to the risks and are prepared to respond to them correctly, you can enjoy working safely in the school or university campus facility.

Practice good hygiene to control potential infections. Wash hands throughout the day and before you eat or drink. Wash down work surfaces to remove germs. Talk with your doctor about your job and consider vaccines against potential health exposures.

Practice good ergonomics. Adjust your computer equipment and chair to your comfort. Use a footrest if you need to support your feet. Rotate your tasks throughout the day. Take micro-breaks to give your body a rest. Use proper lifting techniques, ask for assistance, or use mechanical lifting devices when lifting supplies and other materials. Do not lift young students or "spot" them on playground equipment, you could get injured if they suddenly shift their weight or fall.

Continued from previous page

accidental exposure. Double bag and dispose of medical waste properly. And, keep needles and sharps such as knives, blades, and razors in sturdy, puncture-resistant containers.

Properly use and store chemicals, cleaning or disinfecting solutions, sterilizing agents or solvents, and other materials in well-ventilated areas. Breathing concentrated fumes can harm the skin, mucous membranes, and respiratory system. And, only trained and authorized personnel should use anesthetic gases, chemotherapeutic or hormone drugs, and radiation equipment.

To optimize your physical and mental health keep fit, eat right, and get enough rest. Prevent sprain and

Campus grounds may have scattered equipment and uneven pavement or other surfaces, so be aware of slips, trips, and fall hazards. Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes with a non-slip sole. Practice good housekeeping in classrooms and halls by cleaning up throughout the day. Promptly report spills or accumulated items and get them cleaned up.

Aging and portable buildings along with delayed maintenance can lead to indoor air quality issues such as mold, asbestos and lead paint. Know how to recognize these hazards and promptly report problems when they arise.

Be prepared for accidents and emergencies while you are on the job. Know emergency procedures, exits, and evacuation routes. Know first aid and CPR and practice universal precautions when administering them.

Be prepared for violence on campus. Practice lockdown and shelter-in-place drills. Establish communication methods and have emergency phone numbers available in each facility. Watch for and report unusual behavior or activity.

Know your risks and do your safety preparedness homework. □

strain injuries by practicing proper ergonomics when lifting or moving patients and/or equipment. Ask for help or get a mechanical lifting device to aid you; vary tasks and wear comfortable supportive shoes.

Health care work can be rewarding but also stressful. Stress can accumulate from constant emergencies, administering to traumatic injuries, excessive workloads, or long hours. And, service to at-risk persons in stressful health crises can result in violence.

Stay healthy and safe by following proper procedures and attending training in customer service and handling behavioral crises. Know emergency procedures and alarm systems and practice response drills. □

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 often**
- **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. □

