

# Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund



Issue Four, 2008

## Fall Prevention

Falls are a major cause of workplace injury and death. A fall can happen on the same level (floor or ground) or from one level to another (stairs, ladders, etc.). Falls usually result from an unsafe act (hurrying, overreaching, improper use of equipment, etc.) or an unsafe condition (poor housekeeping, unguarded opening, surface condition etc.). You can prevent most falls by following safe work practices.

Good footing is important to fall prevention. Wear safety boots with adequate tread kept clean from mud, grease or oil. Watch where you walk, especially in poorly lit areas or where surfaces are uneven or unstable. Avoid carrying loads that block your view of travel. Walk slowly and use handrails on stairs. Don't take unsafe shortcuts like leaping from one level to another. Practice good housekeeping; keep walking and working surfaces clear of litter and debris.

Choose ladders constructed for the job task, making a safety check of the ladder before and after use to insure it's in good condition. Position and secure ladders on level, stable surfaces. Face the ladder



and use both hands when climbing. Once on a ladder, your reach distance should keep your belt buckle within the two side rails. Never "walk" the ladder while you're on it; instead, climb down, move the ladder, then climb up it again. Before mounting a scaffold,

make sure it's been constructed, erected, and checked for safety by a designated "qualified person."

When working on an elevated surface such as a roof, make sure you have a secure way to get on or off. Check with your supervisor to see if personal fall arrest devices are required. Stay aware of people and equipment around you. Keep

your center of gravity low and over your feet with your knees bent. Don't carry too much or have your hands too full. Avoid work at heights during windy, rainy, or icy conditions.

Preventing most falls is a matter of common sense. Practice good housekeeping, watch where you're walking, take care how and where you walk, use appropriate fall protection equipment, and don't take chances. If you have questions, talk to your supervisor. □

### TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Attended By \_\_\_\_\_

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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 Trades & Services

Issue Four, 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 Trades & Services 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 FOUR, 2008

STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND

## It Pays To Be Safe

In today's economy, the cost of doing business is skyrocketing. In order to stay in business, companies are looking for ways to hold down expenses.

One way business owners can control costs is to keep their workers safe and healthy. Studies show that the cost of a worker injury or illness can add up to thousands of dollars in medical bills, lost work time, and lost income. But, when companies develop and support an on-going safety and health program, those saved dollars can be put towards profits.

Regardless of the size of a company, its safety and health program should reflect the specific business activity, its location, its workforce, and any regulatory requirement that pertains to the business. The safest companies are those where management and workers partner together to create the program. When workers have a say in establishing the rules that apply to them, they're more likely to abide by those rules.

The responsibility for the success of the program is a team effort and depends on all workers in the company understanding the various elements of the program and their role in supporting those elements. The elements of the program should be easily integrated into everyday business operations and implemented to the degree necessary to prevent worker injury or illness. Once in place, the

program should be continually reviewed to assure that it reflects the existing and any new or changed conditions or hazards.

Although specific details of a safety program may vary from company to company, these are elements common to many successful safety programs:

- There's top management commitment and leadership
- Employees are involved with responsibilities clearly assigned
- A workplace analysis has identified hazards
- Identified hazards are eliminated or controlled
- Relevant safety and health training and protective equipment is provided
- An accident investigation and recordkeeping systems is in place
- Medical and first aid systems are identified and available
- Performance goals and measurements are established

It pays to be safe. A comprehensive safety program can protect a business against financial losses and it can heighten worker morale and increase production. Every injury or illness that's prevented is money saved – money that can be put towards profits. □



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## The Expert's Corner

# Everything In Its Place

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. □*

## Tarping Safety – It's A Wrap!

Tarps are used on trucks to cover and protect a load or to prevent it from shifting. If you tarp loads or transport tarped loads make sure you've been informed about possible tarping hazards and the safety procedures to protect yourself and the load.

Know what type of material is being tarped to anticipate load shifts or gaps. Inspect the hauling truck to determine its height and access points. Although it's safest to affix a tarp from

the ground with the help of a mechanical device or another worker, if you'll be maneuvering the tarp alone, make sure you've been trained in proper tarping procedures including loading or unloading the tarped material. Railed ladders, rack arms, and ramps can serve as safe tarping platforms.

Tarps can be heavy and awkward to move by hand, so, remember to use good body mechanics. Face the tarp, keep your back straight, and pull the tarp out with your

hands at about waist height; avoid twisting or pulling it down with your arms overhead. To remove a tarp, loosen it by fanning to move air underneath. Use your arms, legs, and body weight to pull the tarp off the truck but watch out for unstable loads!

Slips and falls on or off tarped loads and trucks are a hazard. If you MUST climb the truck and onto a load, first evaluate and

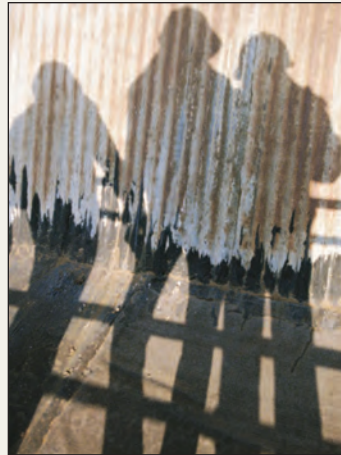
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# Get With The (Substance Abuse) Program

**S**ubstance 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. □

# 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. □

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adjust the load for stability. Face the truck and keep three points in contact at all times while you climb and move around. Some trucks can be rigged with a sliding cable and security bars that you can hook into or you can use a fall arrest system to securely tie-in. Otherwise, use the truck's steps or a small ladder to climb and dismount. To protect your head, consider a helmet with a 3-point harness.

To prevent slips, keep a firm grip on the tarp and ropes. Spread your feet to shoulder width apart and

stagger them slightly for the most power and stability. Watch for surface winds or gusts from traffic that could cause the tarp to fly away. For flatbed trucks, temporary nets or railings made of metal, plastic or canvas can be installed to prevent falls.

Never jump from the load or truck. Use caution when you walk around and over the load; watch for voids and gaps between items. When you dismount a truck or walk around to apply a tarp, watch for oncoming traffic. And, never tarp on the side of a busy road or highway. □

