

# Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund



Issue One, 2009

## Enter and Exit Vehicles Safely

**R**ushing or not paying attention while you enter or exit large commercial vehicles is dangerous, so it's important to take the time to follow all safety procedures.

When you enter a vehicle, face it. Take hold of the grab bar, the seat, or other fixed object in the vehicle to help you climb up. Don't grab the steering wheel unless it is "locked;" it can turn suddenly and throw you off balance. Don't grab the door or handle because it can swing out and cause you to fall. If grab bars are missing or improperly placed, add one. In hot or cold weather gloves can improve your grip.

Plan your steps into the vehicle so that you are standing on the same leg as the side that you are entering. To enter the left/driver's side, stand on your left leg and lift your right leg up. You may need to change hand and feet positions while entering and exiting. Keep three points of contact with the vehicle at all times (one hand and two feet, or two hands and one foot). To avoid falling out backwards, maintain the three point rule until you are securely seated or if exiting, feet are firmly on the ground. Only climb on dedicated stepping areas; fuel tanks and fenders can be slippery. Wear shoes with sturdy, no-slip soles, and a heel. And, keep vehicle steps cleaned and maintained.

To exit the vehicle, examine the ground before you step out. Look for ice, water, cracks, and uneven surfaces. Face the vehicle and step down backward while holding onto the grab bar or other stable



surface. Use all of the steps until you reach the ground. Don't use some of the stairs, then jump and hurt yourself by skipping one. Never jump down or "fall" down forward out of a vehicle; you can catch your clothing on the door handle, seat adjustments, seat belt, etc. causing a serious, uncontrolled fall. Repeated jumping or falling can also cause strains and sprains or other serious injuries.

Practicing safety precautions every time you enter and exit a vehicle, not only saves time in the long run; it can also prevent unnecessary pain and injury.

### 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

News about Occupational Safety and Health in Trades & Services

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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](http://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 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 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

## Stay Alert To Fatigue

**S**tatistics show that worker fatigue is a contributing factor in many serious injury incidents. Fatigue is often a problem for those who work long shifts; drive trucks and other vehicles; operate machinery; and pilot ships, planes, or trains. That's why it's important for employers to provide fatigue awareness and prevention training and to schedule work to allow for fatigue recovery.

Fatigue can be mental or physical. It can impair concentration, alertness, judgment, and work performance. Although, fatigue is primarily the result of inadequate sleep or insufficient rest, other contributing factors include individual fitness; repeated or cumulative stress (mental burnout); environmental conditions such as heat, cold, vibration, or altitude; task endurance or monotony; and the time of day or night the activity takes place.

Because sleep deprivation is the primary cause for fatigue, workers should ensure they've had adequate sleep and rest before they make critical decisions, drive vehicles, operate machinery, or manipulate controls. They should know that rest and sleep are not the same. While sleep restores the mind and body, resting only temporarily restores energy but doesn't have the lasting effects of adequate sleep.

Fatigue can affect reaction time, manual dexterity, and decision-making. It's easy to be lulled to sleep by the hum of an engine, the warmth of a heater, the monotony of a continuous road, of staring at an instrument panel, and by dim lights or the dark of night. So, workers should recognize early signs of fatigue such as a lapse in attention or not remembering the last ten miles or ten minutes.



During long periods of continuous work activity or when workers notice that they're "glazing over" or feeling drowsy, they should take a break from what they're doing, pull off the road and take a nap, or ask a coworker to "take over" for a few minutes of rest.

At least once every two hours during an eight-hour shift or whenever feeling fatigued, workers should vary the activity, re-adjust positions, take a short break, walk around, take deep breaths, eat a light and healthy snack, talk to a coworker, or even sing or talk out loud. Since dehydration increases the effect of fatigue, drinking plenty of non-caffeinated liquids throughout their work shift is also recommended.

However, the most important factor in preventing fatigue for workers to get adequate sleep and sufficient rest. □

### In This Issue

#### Feature Articles

Stay Alert To Fatigue

The Expert's Corner –  
Tuberculosis –  
A Continuing Threat

Spread The Word About  
Contamination

Make Yourself Comfortable

Required Exits Revised

Safety Topic –  
Enter And Exit Vehicles  
Safely

#### In Each Issue

Employer Education Series  
Reporting Injuries

**STATE**  
COMPENSATION  
INSURANCE  
**FUND**

## The Expert's Corner

# Tuberculosis – A Continuing Threat

**T**uberculosis (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](http://www.osha.gov). The Center for Disease Control is also an excellent source of information on TB. Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). □

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

## Spread The Word About Contamination

**S**ome work processes require workers to safely handle contaminated materials that are not meant to leave the area. However, if recommended safe work practices are not strictly followed, workers can spread contaminants around the worksite and into their homes by soiled clothing, shoes, and skin contact. Contaminants can also be transferred by way of items workers touch, sit on or walk on. Good personal hygiene, including hand washing, showering,

and changing dirty clothing and shoes, can help prevent cross contamination.

Workers that handle chemicals and contaminants in the workplace are aware that the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, safety glasses, respirators, coveralls, and boots, can reduce or eliminate their exposures. But, if workers don't properly wash, remove or decontaminate soiled PPE after leaving the work area, they can spread

the contaminants outside the work zone, to themselves, their coworkers, and to their family, home, and car.

The spread of contaminants is hazardous when unprotected workers, coworkers or family members come into contact with the substance or material. Skin exposures occur if they touch a soiled surface, and accidental

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# Make Yourself Comfortable

**M**any of today's jobs require employees to spend long hours working at a computer. Most sit slouched or hunched over the computer rapidly and repeatedly entering data. Many hours of applying constant force to muscles, joints or tendons and working in awkward postures can over-stress body parts and increase the chance of a debilitating musculoskeletal injury. One of the most effective ways to decrease the possibility of injury is to make sure the computer workstation and the individual are a good ergonomic fit.



**The worker** – It's important to flex the hands, shoulders, and neck before, during, and after long hours at the computer; and, to vary eye focus or work activities, when possible.

When seated at the computer, the spine should have its normal curve with the feet on the floor or on a footrest. Workers should be reminded to keep hands, arms, and shoulders loose and relaxed. The neck should be straight, the head centered above the spine, the knees and arms bent roughly at 90-degree angles or greater, and the wrists and hands straight.

The risk of injury increases if the body doesn't have time to rest or recover. So, periodic breaks or varying work activities is beneficial. Workers should let their supervisor know if they need assistance in arranging their workstation and encourage them to report if they are experiencing pain or discomfort during or after computer work. □

**The equipment** – Raise or lower the desk, chair, or computer screen to fit the individual. The monitor should be at a comfortable distance so the worker does not strain the neck or eyes to see the screen. The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level. Input document papers should be in a holder at the same level as the screen. Padded arm rests, telephone headsets, back supports, and footrests can take pressure off of arms, neck, and lower back.

## *Continued from previous page*

ingestion can occur if they eat or drink something that has been contaminated. The contaminants of concern include chemicals such as solvents, herbicides, and pesticides, and industrial materials such as lead, asbestos and fiberglass. Potentially infectious materials such as blood and other body fluids pose a bloodborne pathogen hazard.

When workers hug family members, prepare food, or touch the furniture, bedding, and carpets in the home, contamination could result if they have not washed their skin and removed or decontaminated soiled clothing and PPE. Workers can contaminate their coworkers and the worksite when they contact areas such as the break room, restroom, or office areas. Workers can also increase their own

exposures if they eat, drink or smoke before washing their hands and removing or cleaning their PPE.

Cross contamination of the workplace can be prevented by removing or decontaminating PPE and washing hands before exiting the work zone. To prevent cross contamination at home, workers should wash their hands and faces at the end of a work shift and change into clean clothes and shoes. Workers can also take a shower and wash their hair before leaving work or as soon as they get home. Work clothes should be washed in hot water, separately from the family clothing, and given two rinse cycles. □

# Required Exits Revised

In 2008, the standard for the number of exits required for a worksite was revised.

The law now requires every building or usable portion thereof to have at least two exits to permit prompt evacuation of employees and other building occupants during an emergency. The exits must be located as far away as practicable from each other so that if one exit is inaccessible because of fire or smoke, employees can evacuate using the second exit.

A single exit is permitted where the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy or the arrangement of the workplace is such that all employees would be able to evacuate safely during an emergency.

More than two exits must be provided in a workplace if the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy, or the arrangement of the workplace is such that all employees would not be able to evacuate safely during an emergency if only two exits were provided.

For assistance in determining the number of exits in your workplace, and their distance requirements, consult Title 24, Part 2, California Code of Regulations, and your local fire department or visit <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3228.html> □

