

## news & notes

### ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready for the next safety meeting or safety training session?

- Are your mind, eyes, and ears open and ready to see, hear, and learn what you need to know to prevent accidents, injuries, and illnesses?
- Do you have paper and a pen so you can take notes about points brought up during the meeting?
- Are you prepared to participate in the session by asking questions, raising safety concerns, sharing your knowledge and experience, and giving your advice and suggestions when appropriate?
- Are you ready to listen to what co-workers say about the topic being discussed and to hear their concerns about safety?
- Are you willing to take what you learn back to work and use it?

If your answer to all these questions is “yes,” then yes, you are ready.

### DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Sometimes people think that they're just supposed to show up at safety meetings and training sessions to listen, that they're not supposed to talk. But that's not true.

Don't be afraid to ask questions if there's anything you don't understand. And don't hesitate to speak up if you have something useful to contribute. Participation is an important part of learning.



**September 2009**

## If Only They'd Paid Attention

*Why safety meetings and training are important*

One of the best ways to get the safety information you need to avoid job accidents is in safety meetings and training sessions. That's where you'll learn what you have to know to protect yourself and your co-workers from workplace hazards.

Here are some true stories of workers who probably didn't pay enough attention in safety meetings and training sessions.

- **A worker's arm was crushed** when he reached into a conveyor belt mechanism to remove a blockage. He turned the power off but didn't lock out the conveyor. A co-worker who couldn't see him turned the power back on.
- **An employee died** when he tried to stop a hazardous solvent spill by turning off a valve instead of following workplace rules to evacuate. He wasn't wearing a respirator and was overcome by toxic vapors.
- **A worker was killed** when a piece of metal he was cutting bounced off the table and hit him in the head. He wasn't wearing a required hard hat.
- **A worker in a trench was killed** in a cave-in because he failed to properly shore up the sides.
- **Two workers were killed** when a crane fell over on them because a co-worker had loaded the crane above its rated capacity.
- **Both workers died** when an employee with no protective equipment or safety line tried to help a co-worker who was overcome by cyanide gas while cleaning a tank.
- **One employee died and one was seriously injured** because the overloaded scaffold they were working on collapsed, sending them 12 feet to the ground.
- **An employee was killed** when she tried to slip past a backing forklift. The operator didn't see the worker behind him, and she was crushed between the forklift and a wall.

If only these workers had paid more attention in safety meetings and safety training sessions, they would have known that what they were doing was dangerous and might result in an accident. Had they known, they might have escaped injury or death. Don't be like them! Be informed.

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### SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SAFETY

September is **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month**. Why talk about this? Because the majority of Americans abusing drugs, alcohol, or both are employed. And their abuse problem almost always causes a *safety* problem.

People working under the influence of drugs or alcohol are three times more likely to have accidents. And they may not be the only ones hurt. Co-workers are often injured as a result of someone else's substance abuse on the job.

Think about these facts:

- Some 6.5 percent of full-time and 8.6 percent of part-time workers are current illegal drug users.
- Alcohol is the most widely abused drug among working adults. An estimated 6.2 percent of adults working full time are heavy drinkers.
- Of 12.4 million heavy drinkers, 30.5 percent are also current illegal drug users.
- More than 60 percent of working Americans know someone who has reported for work under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Up to 40 percent of workplace fatalities and 47 percent of injuries are linked to substance abuse.

Now's the time to take action if you or someone you know has a problem. Awareness of the problem and of treatment options is the first step to a healthier, safer life. The next step is getting help. And help is just a phone call away.



# What Do You Know?

*Don't draw a blank on safety information*

Here's a quiz to test your general safety knowledge.

1. If you see a safety hazard you can't safely fix yourself, \_\_\_\_\_ it.
2. Only use a fire extinguisher to fight \_\_\_\_\_, contained fires.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ on a chemical container warns of safety and health hazards.
4. To protect workplace security, report \_\_\_\_\_ individuals or activities.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, such as safety glasses and hard hats, are personal barriers against job hazards.
6. If you don't understand a safety procedure or don't know if something is a hazard, ask a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. A hazardous space with limited entry and exit areas that only trained, equipped, and authorized personnel are allowed to enter is called a \_\_\_\_\_ space.
8. Never touch anything electrical with \_\_\_\_\_ hands.
9. When you have to lift an object, lift with your \_\_\_\_\_ muscles.
10. Places where fingers, hands, or other body parts can get caught between two surfaces or between moving machine parts are known as \_\_\_\_\_ points.

**Answers:** (1) Report (2) Small (3) Label (4) Suspicious (5) Personal protective equipment (PPE) (6) Supervisor (7) Confined (8) Wet (9) Leg (10) Pinch

## Wake Up and Be Safe!

*Don't let drowsiness cause accidents*

Sleep experts say many people don't get enough sleep. Statistics show that as many as 40 percent of Americans say that they've been sleepy enough during the day that it interferes with their daily activities. And that can have a negative impact on workplace safety.

To counteract drowsiness on the job and prevent accidents:

- Take a minibreak and do some stretching exercises right at your workstation.
- Go to the restroom and splash cold water on your face.
- Take a walk during your rest break to help refresh and wake you up.
- Drink a caffeinated beverage.

Avoid tasks that require sharp physical or mental skills when you're very tired. For example, operating machinery, driving a vehicle or forklift, or handling hazardous materials could be dangerous if you're not fully alert.

- Be honest and don't put yourself or others at risk.
- Switch to a less risky task, if possible, until you feel more awake.
- Talk with your supervisor if you're concerned about your abilities—or someone else's. Also talk to your supervisor if you're taking a medication that makes you feel drowsy and could put you or a co-worker at risk.

There's a direct connection between fatigue and accidents. So keep alert!