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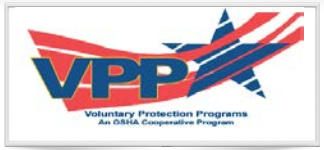
HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Water Safety Tips



OSHA VPP

Excavations and Trenching

Are Safety and Productivity Enemies?

Cost Shifting

Cloud of Confusion

Work Safe. Live Safe. Stay Safe.

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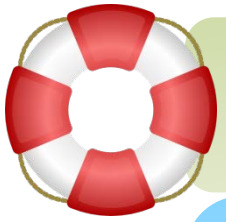
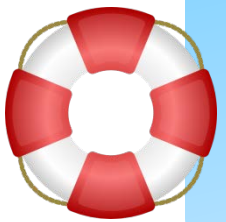
Float These Water Safety Tips

Summer weather = Water fun! Summer is a special time for having fun in the water, yet drowning is a leading cause of unintentional death. Each year more than 1,000 children under the age of 14 drown. Another 16,000 are rushed to hospitals for near-drowning. Children ages 4 and under are at the greatest risk. Many adults do not realize that a child can drown is as little as one inch of water. Most drowning occurs at home or in residential pools. Drowning is many times called the "silent killer" as you might not hear a cry for help or the sound of a splash to alert you that a child is in trouble. To keep your summer fun and tragedy-free, follow these safety tips:



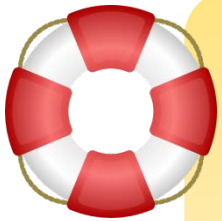
At home:

- Never leave a child alone in or near water, including bathtubs, sinks and toilets.
- Never rely on any type of support ring to keep your child safe in the bathtub.
- Empty all buckets and any other containers that hold water or any other fluid immediately after use.
- Use toilet locks for children in the house under ages 4 and under.



In pools:

- Never leave a child alone in or near a swimming pool even just to answer the telephone.
- Enclose a pool or spa with four-sided fence which is a minimum of five feet in height, which has self-closing and self-latching gates. It is recommended that the side of a house not be used as any of the sides of the fenced area.
- Have rescue equipment nearby, such as a shepherd's crook, life ring, solid pole, or rope readily available.
- Make sure all wading pools are emptied and turned over immediately after use.
- Learn first aid and CPR, especially infant CPR.
- Use door and pool alarms and automatic pool covers for extra protection.
- Teach every child how to swim. Get professional training, but never rely solely on the swimming lessons to protect a child from drowning.
- Teach the importance of never running, pushing or jumping on others around water.
- Babies and toddlers should wear swim diapers.



In open water:

- Never leave children alone and make sure older children always swim with a friend about the same age or with an adult.
- Always make sure that children swim in approved designated areas in oceans, lakes and rivers. Always check the depth of the water before swimming or diving. If swimming in the ocean, check the current and under-tow.
- Obey warning signs. Learn the meaning of warning flags on beaches, such as red to denote hazards and purple to indicate the presence of marine life, such as jellyfish.
- Be sure every child wears a proper fitting life jacket when on a boat or near water. Air-filled swimming aids, such as "water wings", are not safe substitutes for life jackets. Never rely on a life jacket alone to protect your child.

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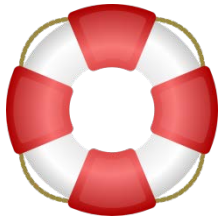
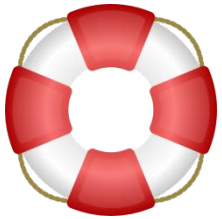
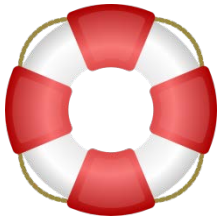
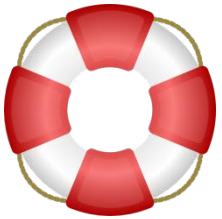

Float These Water Safety Tips Continued…

Avoid Alcohol
The CDC reports that alcohol use was reported in half of the water related fatalities for adults and teens in 2007. Alcohol affects your balance, judgment, coordination and stamina. Bad choices or sudden fatigue in deep water could result in serious or even fatal injury.

In an emergency, you do not want to have to hunt for the safety equipment. Keep emergency telephone numbers poolside. Use door and pool alarms. Get trained in CPR.

A little planning can help ensure that your family and friends will have a safe and enjoyable summer.

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OSHA VPP – Are You Ready?

History of OSHA VPP

The Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) began in California in 1979 as an experimental program. Federal OSHA formally announced the VPP in 1982 and approved the first VPP site. In 1998 Federal worksites became eligible for VPP.

According to OSHA, the average VPP worksite has a Days Away Restricted or Transferred (DART) case rate of 52% below the average for its industry. These sites typically do not start out with such low rates. Reductions in injuries and illnesses begin when the site commits to the VPP approach to safety and health management and the challenging VPP application process.

VPP is composed of three different programs:

1. **STAR** – recognizes sites that have distinguished themselves with the highest level of safety and health excellence;
2. **MERIT** – recognizes sites that have good safety and health programs, but must take additional steps to reach Star quality;
3. **STAR DEMONSTRATION** – recognizes worksites that have Star quality safety and health programs, but requires demonstration and/or testing of experimental approaches that differ from current Star requirements.

How Does VPP Benefit Employers?

The incentives to developing and implementing effective worker safety and health programs and VPP recognition are significant as well as abundant. Fewer injuries and illnesses mean greater profits as workers' compensation premiums and other costs plummet. Entire industries benefit as VPP sites evolve into models of excellence and influence practices industry-wide. One of the key measures of the benefits the VPP provides in terms on enhanced safety performance is seen by lowered injury incidence cases. According to 1995 data from Federal OSHA VPP sites, approved VPP participants experienced 51% fewer injury incidences than their respective industry averages. VPP also brings recognition and prestige to a safety program.

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What Does It Take?

Management Leadership and Employee Involvement

- Management Commitment to Safety and Health Protection and to VPP
- Participation – committed personal involvement
- Safety & Health Policy
- Safety and Health Management System Goals, Objectives, and Planning
- Visible top Management Leadership
- Clearly Assigned Safety and Health Responsibilities and Documentation of Authority
- Line Accountability
- Resources Necessary to Meet Responsibilities
- Meaningful Employee Involvement and Decision-Making Opportunities
- Contract Worker Coverage That Ensures Effective Safety and Health Protection for All Personnel at the Site
- Annual Safety and Health Management System Evaluations
- Enforcement (i.e., rules, policies, procedures, disciplinary actions)
- Top site management's personal involvement

Worksite Analysis

- Hazard Assessment of Routine Jobs, Tasks, and Processes
- Hazard Analysis of Significant Changes, New Processes, and Non-routine Tasks
- Routine Self-inspections
- Hazard Reporting System for Employees
- Industrial Hygiene Program
- Investigation of Accidents and Near-misses
- Trend/Pattern Analysis [for injuries, hazards identified, etc.]

Hazard Prevention and Control

- Access to Safety and Health Professionals
- Means for Eliminating or Controlling Hazards [This is the place to evaluate and provide a summary of any audit results on individual programs on the site such as PPE, Safety and Health Rules, Lockout/Tagout, Confined Space Entry, etc., as well as engineering and administrative controls].
- Preventive Maintenance Program
- Tracking of Hazard Correction
- Occupational Health Program Including (at Minimum) Nearby Medical Services, Staff Trained in First Aid and CPR, Hazard Analysis by Licensed Health Care Professionals, etc.
- Emergency Response Program and Procedures
- Process Safety Management (if applicable) - VPP participants whose operations are covered by the Process Safety Management (PSM) Standard must also provide responses to each question in the VPP PSM Questionnaire (Supplement "B") that is applicable to their operations. Responses must cover all PSM-related operations and be of sufficient detail. The questionnaire may be found on the VPP site web page.

Safety and Health Training

- Managers/Supervisors - Emphasizing Safety and Health Leadership Responsibilities
- Employees – Safety and Health Management System, Hazard Identification, Control of Hazards, Policies and Procedures, etc.
- All others on the site [including what to do in emergency situations]
- PPE Requirements [known and used effectively]
- Documentation of All Training That Individual Employees Receive

Reference: OSHA VPP Website
http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/vpp/index.html#success

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Excavations and Trenching – Dangerous and Dirty Business

Excavation and trenching are among the most hazardous construction operations. OSHA defines an excavation as any man-made cut, cavity, trench, or depression in the earth's surface formed by earth removal. A trench is defined as a narrow underground excavation that is deeper than it is wide, and is no wider than 15 feet (4.5 meters).

We see this work going on all around us: installation or replacement of water, sewer and utility lines, swimming pool construction or tank removal. Excavation projects vary considerably, each with its own set of unique problems.

In 1971, OSHA issued its first standard related to excavations and trenching. Since that time, OSHA has changed the standard in an effort to reduce injuries and fatalities. Despite these efforts, accidents related to excavations and trenching activities continue to occur at a high rate prompting OSHA to sponsor a National Emphasis Program (NEP) to address the hazards. Under this emphasis, all compliance personnel are instructed to be on the lookout for trenching or excavation worksites, which gives compliance officers the ability to stop and see if there are any issues in regards to safety and compliance with the site excavation.

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OSHA

Dangers of Trenching and Excavation

Cave-ins pose the greatest risk and are much more likely than other excavation related accidents to result in worker fatalities. Other potential hazards include falls, falling loads, hazardous atmospheres, and incidents involving mobile equipment. Trench collapses cause dozens of fatalities and hundreds of injuries each year.

Short cuts, cost cutting, non-existent safety culture, ignorance of the hazards, or Incompetent competent persons – what the wrong is, make it right!

Protect Yourself

Do not enter an unprotected trench! Trenches 5 feet (1.5 meters) deep or greater require a protective system unless the excavation is made entirely in stable rock. Trenches 20 feet (6.1 meters) deep or greater require that the protective system be de-signed by a registered professional engineer or be based on tabulated data prepared and/ or approved by a registered professional engineer.

Protective Systems

There are different types of protective systems. Sloping involves cutting back the trench wall at an angle inclined away from the excavation. Shoring requires installing aluminum hydraulic or other types of supports to prevent soil movement and cave-ins. Shielding protects workers by using trench boxes or other types of supports to prevent soil cave-ins. Designing a protective system can be complex because you must consider many factors: soil classification, depth of cut, water content of soil, changes due to weather or climate, surcharge loads (eg., spoil, other materials to be used in the trench) and other operations in the vicinity.

Competent Person

OSHA standards require that trenches be inspected daily and as conditions change by a competent person prior to worker entry to ensure elimination of excavation hazards. A competent person is an individual who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards or working conditions that are hazardous, unsanitary, or dangerous to employees and who is authorized to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate or control these hazards and conditions, and does.

Access and Egress

OSHA requires safe access and egress to all excavations, including ladders, steps, ramps, or other safe means of exit for employees working in trench excavations 4 feet (1.22 meters) or deeper. These devices must be located within 25 feet (7.6 meters) of all workers.

General Trenching and Excavation Rules

- Keep heavy equipment away from trench edges.
- Keep surcharge loads at least 2 feet (0.6 meters) from trench edges.
- Know where underground utilities are located.
- Test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases.
- Inspect trenches at the start of each shift.
- Inspect trenches following a rainstorm.
- Do not work under raised loads.

Additional Information - Visit OSHA's Safety and Health Topics web page on trenching and excavation

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Are Safety and Productivity Enemies?

Why is it when management says “Safety is our number 1 priority” employees hear “Production is number 1 priority”? This disconnect between management’s words and employees’ beliefs is one of the biggest issues that I have encountered with most organizations that I have worked with over the years. During work hours a typical conversation with executives and plant managers is that “we place safety first and value the health and safety of our workforce”.

Are Safety and Productivity enemies? We pose this question to blue collar personnel, supervisors, and executives while they are off the clock every chance we get. This gives us more insight into how people honestly feel when they are not in working mode. If you sat back and thought about it, what would you say? Here are some of the responses that we have received:

“My guys are safer without all the extra safety fluff. We get the job done the way we know how. You can’t be a baby and not expect cuts or the occasional accident. Our job is tough and accidents happen. You can’t prevent stupid!”

“Yes, total enemies. If we had to do all of the inspections, safety talks and abide by every safety rule, we would never get the job done.”

“We don’t want anyone to get hurt or die. We try to be safe but the job has to be done.”

“If we want to knock the job out on schedule, we can try to do it as safe as we can in the timeframe given.”

“Employee productivity/ performance/ efficiency and employee safety/comfort/well-being are intertwined. If we don’t mix them together properly ahead of time, we are stirring up a nasty mixture that can explode in our face.”

“Sometimes the ‘safety’ solution is the ‘productivity’ solution. When we identify the potential hazards, we actually end up being more productive.”

“Listen, safety and productivity go hand in hand. I teach my crew the importance of using the right tool, inspecting the worksite before start-up, controlling the hazards and having a positive attitude. They understand the costs of one trip to the hospital or having an injured co-worker be off work. People need to be educated and understand how safety does not waste time and keeps our costs controlled.”

“Safety drives productivity! Only when employees understand the proper integration of safety and production are they able to make the right choices. We have the right supervisors in place and are held accountable.”

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When safety and production clash, we might as well post a sign saying “Production First”. It’s clearly not enough to tell personnel that safety comes first – if that were the case, the “Safety First” signs would be all you need.

An effective start is to ask workers to talk about current perceptions about workplace challenges such as safety versus production and what drives risk-taking. Then discuss the nature of hazards at the workplace. What are the risks associated with them? What are the potential consequences of these risks?

Employees have to learn how the consequences of their choices can impact the things they value most (family, income, time). They also need to understand how their choices impact the company and their back pockets. Supervisors have to learn the consequences of their choices and how they lead and champion safety efforts. If they don’t promote safety and turn a blind eye towards hazards or unsafe actions, the process fails. Senior executives can state they have commitment, but what overrides commitment is action.

Cost Shifting

A recent study by NIOSH researchers reports that many work-related injuries treated in emergency rooms aren't being billed to workers comp. The figure approaches 40%, according to Celeste Monforton, who discusses this study in a post at The Pump Handle, Hefty portion of work-related injury costs not paid for by workers' comp, others picking up the tab.

"The analysis involves four years of data from the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS), a representative sample of U.S. emergency room visits. An estimated 458 million emergency department (ED) visits occurred between 2003-2006, based on the representative sample of 146,296 cases. The researchers specifically examined the subset of emergency room visits which were coded as a work-related injury or illness."

She notes that while not all workers are covered by workers comp, other may prefer private insurance out of fear of some disciplinary action. The impact of the study is enormous, both in terms of the economic cost-shifting implications and the accuracy or work-related injury data.

Source: http://workerscompinsider.com

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Medical Marijuana vs. Company Drug Testing – Cloud of Confusion

One reason for a drug-free workplace policy is employee safety. But how do the growing number of state medical marijuana laws factor into this? So far, 18 states and DC have enacted laws to legalize medical marijuana. But what if you have implemented a zero-tolerance policy? When it comes to policy enforcement, companies in some states find this issue to be complicated.

When it comes to safety, federal regulations can come into play. OSHA's General Duty Clause states that all employers must provide a safe work environment to employees. So if it can be shown that an employee's impairment is a danger to himself or other workers, a company can suspend or fire the worker.

On top of that, the federal Department of Transportation has issued guidelines that prohibit the use of medical marijuana for transportation workers in safety-sensitive jobs, including pilots, school bus drivers, truck drivers, subway operators, ship captains and transit security workers who are armed.

Some states make it slightly more difficult to fire employees who have tested positive for marijuana. In several states, the employer must prove the employee was impaired by the marijuana use for the firing to be legal.
So it appears, overall, that the growing number of laws that allow marijuana use — whether for medical or recreational purposes — don't change the situation for employers, at least not much. Companies can have zero-tolerance drug-use policies, including those for safety reasons. And employers can enforce these policies by firing employees who violate them. As is the case with all company rules regarding employee conduct, a key is to apply the policies equally to all workers.

As courts rule on worker lawsuits against companies over the issue of medical marijuana, employers will receive more guidance. Until then, research your state laws and get legal counsel involved before taking action.

References:
http://medicalmarijuana.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000881
SafetyNewsAlert.com, Worker uses medical marijuana: Can he be fired for it?, May 6, 2013 by Fred Hosier

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In the News

GREENVILLE, N.C. — A former Fayetteville postal carrier who was receiving worker's compensation payments after injuring herself on the job pleaded guilty to fraud in federal court Monday.

Cathy Wrench Cashwell's claim that she couldn't lift mail trays into a truck due to a 2004 on-the-job shoulder injury was called into question in September 2009 when she appeared on "The Price is Right" and spun the "big wheel" twice.

According to an indictment filed in September 2012, Cashwell "raised her left arm above her head and gripped the handle with her left hand." On a second spin, she "raised both arms above her head and gripped the same handle with both hands."

In August 2010, the indictment alleges, Cashwell and her husband went ziplining as part of a Carnival Cruise vacation. She was also seen lifting and carrying furniture and bags of groceries with both arms on two different occasions in 2011.

Federal investigators say Cashwell knowingly lied when she wrote on her worker's compensation paperwork in September 2011 that she couldn't stand, sit, kneel, squat, climb, bend, reach or grasp.

Private investigator Allison Blackman said worker's compensation fraud is not uncommon.

"There's a lot of people out there not hurt who are drawing worker's comp," he said. "I've seen every kind of case you can see ... Sometimes you have to get in the woods and bushes. The secret is you've got to have your camera up, when they do what they're doing.“

Blackman estimated that nearly 30 percent of worker's compensation claims in North Carolina are fraudulent.

Cashwell is slated for sentencing in September.

Reference: http://www.wral.com/-price-is-right-run-foils-fayetteville-postal-carrier-s-worker-s-comp-claim/12511076/

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Nail Gun Safety Reminders

Nail Gun Trigger Safety

- Do not remove the safety tip spring or disable any safety device. These actions are prohibited by OSHA.
- Use the “single shot” trigger (also called full sequential trigger) when possible.
- Ask your employer for nail gun safety training if you are new user. Understand how the different triggers and safety devices work. OSHA requires this training.
- Know what type of trigger you are using before you start working.

Safe Nail Gun Use

- Hold and carry the nail gun with our finger OFF the trigger.
- Keep co-workers out of your line of fire.
- Keep you free hand as far from the nailing location as possible.
- Use extra care when toe nailing, nailing in tight spaces, from a ladder, or with the gun above your head.
- Allow space for nail gun recoil (kickback) and don’t try to stop or fight this recoil.
- Clear a nail jam after you disconnect the hose.
- Shoot the bottom nail first when fastening a stud to a plate.
- Know where the studs or joists are when shooting plywood or OSB.
- Use your dominant hand to operate a nail gun.
- Always wear eye protection, hard hat, safety shoes, and hearing protection as required by OSHA.
- Never horseplay or fool around with nail guns.
- Seek medical treatment immediately if injured with a nail gun.

Lumber & Building Materials

- Check lumber for knots, nails, straps, or other things that can cause a nail to ricochet or deflect.
- Use extra care with warped or twisted lumber.
- Only use a hammer, palm nailer or positive placement teco nailer for fastening metal straps or other connectors.

Compressors & Hoses

- Inspect nail gun, air hose, hose fittings and compressor to ensure they work properly.
- Lubricate nail guns on a regular basis.
- Don’t lift, lower, or carry nail gun y the air hose.
- Disconnect the air hose when clearing a nail jam or doing any maintenance on the nail gun.
- Make sure the air pressure is in the recommended range, usually 8 – 120 psi.

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Contact Monica Meyer today to learn more about how we can help you manage your health and safety risks.