

New Approaches to Safety

The US economy has shifted away from manufacturing toward the service sector. And the manufacturing that remains changes much more quickly. Some are calling for change.

Among those calling for change is safety consulting firm ORC Worldwide. It has just released a white paper, *Breaking the Cycle: New Approaches to Establishing National Workplace Safety and Health Policy*.

Their recommendations are:

1. Conduct a “national dialog” to encourage employers to use systems-based approaches to assess and reduce safety and health risks.

The paper says it’s time to recognize the impossibility of keeping up with workplace changes and developing standards at a sufficient pace. Instead, it suggests employers be required to set up programs to identify, assess, reduce and control risks.

2. Evaluate the stagnated OSHA standards-setting system and develop effective alternatives.

ORC notes enacting new or updating old standards will always be necessary. So it calls for an expert panel to submit recommendations for changes. Then, OSHA would solicit input

from the broader safety community before enacting changes.

3. Establish open and transparent forums for stakeholders to participate in the development of new safety policies and prioritization of initiatives.

ORC recommends OSHA conduct public forums to help it prioritize its regulatory agenda and recommend which issues should be addressed by either standards or guidelines. It also calls on the government to use the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health in this role.

Texting

Although texting is not against the law yet; studies have shown it to be more dangerous than a person driving drunk or high.

Reaction times are reduced by 35% while texting, compared to 12% while under the influence of alcohol and 21% on pot.

Reason: While texting not only are drivers taking their hands off the wheel but they are also trying to read small text on the display while thinking of what to write.

Additional studies have found more troubling findings:

Steering control by texters was 91% poorer than average drivers.

Texters were less able to maintain safe distances from other cars, and they drifted out of their lanes more.

Researches have also found that people are aware of their impairment – but not aware of how great that is.

For business sake: ban workers from texting while driving.

Quote of the Month

“A fugitive from the law of averages –that’s you if you don’t use your safety gear.”



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MONTHLY TOOLBOX TALK

WINTER WEATHER HAZARDS

Now that we are getting into the heart of the winter season, it is a good time to talk about winter safety. Cold winter weather, with its attendant snow, ice, and blizzards, is a normal part of life in our part of the country. Many people who enjoy winter sports like skiing, ice skating, ice hockey, ice fishing, sledding, or tobogganing avidly anticipate winter and the cold weather conditions they need to enjoy their favorite pastimes. And that's one of the reasons that cold weather can be so dangerous: it is sometimes hard to remember that something you enjoy so much and look forward to for so long can also kill you if you aren't careful.

Employees who work outdoors or in unheated areas especially need to be aware of safe working habits. But even those who work in climate-controlled spaces could benefit from increased awareness of the potential hazards of exposure to cold.

Hazard Communication

There are two major health hazards associated with over exposure to cold: frostbite and hypothermia.

Frostbite is caused by the formation of ice crystals in the body's fluids and soft tissues. It is readily distinguishable by a white or grayish-yellow skin tint and the lack of pain or feeling in the affected skin tissue area. The skin may also blister. Extremities – the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers and toes – are most often affected. Frostbite can cause permanent tissue damage and loss of movement in affected areas; in very bad cases, amputation is sometimes required. In extreme cases, the victim may lose consciousness and stop breathing. Heart failure is possible.

Hypothermia describes the condition of dramatically lowered body temperature that can result from overexposure to cold. Symptoms include numbness or stiffness, especially in the neck, arms, or legs. As well as, drowsiness, mental confusion, and loss of skin color. Like frostbite, it can cause loss of consciousness and may be fatal.

Anyone can be at risk of exposure to cold, but conditions sometimes arise that can require more than the usual care in preparing for cold weather conditions. These include the following:

Personal Risk Factors: Those who smoke, drink, or take certain prescription medications (including some sedatives) are at greater risk from exposure to cold, as

are the elderly, the overweight, and people with allergies or poor circulation.

The Wind Chill Factor: A stiff wind can make a bitter day downright deadly. It is critical that employees who must work outdoors monitor the daily wind chill factor and adhere strictly to recommendations for safe exposure times.

To prevent frostbite:

- ◇ Wear several layers of loose-fitting, natural fiber clothing.
- ◇ Take special care with extremities, which are most vulnerable – wear wool socks, gloves and warm head protection.
- ◇ Wear earflaps and earmuffs to protect the neck and ears. Wear a ski mask in windy weather.

To prevent hypothermia:

- ◇ Eat sensibly. A diet high in carbohydrates will help you produce energy and keep warm. Avoid alcohol in cold weather – it increases loss of body heat.
- ◇ Dress for the weather.
- ◇ Stay dry. If you get wet while working or playing in the snow, change into dry clothes quickly. (Wool provides some natural insulation when wet.)
- ◇ Avoid prolonged exposure to cold, and pay strict attention to the wind chill factor.

Emergency Response

In the case of overexposure to cold, it's critical to know what not to do.

Don't

- ⊗ Rub an area affected by frostbite
- ⊗ Break any blisters
- ⊗ Allow the victim alcohol or caffeine
- ⊗ Expose the victim directly to a heat source, whether fireplace, woodstove, hot bath, hot water bottle, or electric blanket.

DO

- ⊙ Get the victim indoors and out of the cold
- ⊙ Remove any damp, cold, or restrictive clothing; provide loose, warm clothing or wrap the victim loosely in warm blankets
- ⊙ Offer a warm non-alcoholic decaffeinated drink. Warm milk or decaffeinated tea with honey would be ideal
- ⊙ Gently warm a frostbitten toe or finger in tepid (barely lukewarm) water
- ⊙ Get prompt medical assistance.