

Employers Encouraged to Recognize April as Alcohol Awareness Month

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month, and employers, unions and other organizations are encouraged to participate by educating workers about the dangers of alcohol both on and off the job. Provide resources to help those struggling with alcohol problems.

For example, organizations can organize onsite training sessions, guest speakers or brown bag lunches focused on the topic of alcohol. A variety of related brochures, posters and fact sheets are available through the National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information to support such efforts or for dissemination to employees through other channels, such as employee newsletters or worksite displays.

National Alcohol Awareness Month also presents an opportune time to remind employees about Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Member Assistance Program (MAP) services, if available. Such programs offer free, confidential services to help all employees resolve personal problems, such as alcohol abuse, that may be affecting their work performance.

Even if screenings are not offered, organizations can educate employees about community resources that can help someone

struggling with alcohol abuse. Help is likely available nearby through a hospital, local health department or stand-alone Substance Abuse Treatment Center. Also, self-help programs, such as the 12-step programs of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, are free and available nationwide.

Employers and unions have a vested interest in helping to prevent worker alcohol problems. Alcohol can significantly impair a worker's judgment and coordination, leading to an increased risk of on-the-job accidents and injuries. It can also lead to lower levels of productivity and employee morale, not only in those with alcohol problems, but also those working alongside them.

Organizations interested in learning about how they can minimize the risks of worker alcohol use can visit the following website "Working Partners for an Alcohol- and- Drug-Free Workplace"; <http://www.dol.gov/workingpartners> The web site is a U.S. Department of Labor initiative that helps employers create drug-free workplace programs that educate about the dangers of alcohol and encourage individuals with alcohol problems to seek help.

Energy Drinks Containing Alcohol

A warning you can give employees – especially the younger ones. Research has shown that mixing energy drinks and alcohol may lead drunken people to believe they are

capable of potentially dangerous activities. People who consume energy drinks that contain alcohol believe they are going to be energetic, when in fact they are likely to be a wide-awake drunk.

Studies have shown that caffeine in these drinks does nothing to counteract the effects of alcohol.

Most of these drinks have up to 300mg of caffeine in one serving. More than 500mg per day on a regular basis can lead to high blood pressure, anxiety and panic attacks.

In general, drinking energy drinks with or without alcohol isn't a good thing.

Quote of the Month

"At work, at home, let safety be known."



Publisher: Building Industry Employers of New York State
Jack Endryck, Managing Director
1-800-344-1841

Editor: Construction Industry Services Association, Inc.
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1-585-586-1564

Monthly Toolbox Talk

MYTHS REGARDING ELECTRICITY

There's a widespread, but mistaken idea that 110 volts can't seriously injure or kill a person. Each of you should think about the dangers of low voltage electricity, especially if you use portable electric tools. Under the right circumstance, even low voltages can kill. **It only takes 1/10 of an AMP TO KILL YOU!**

The possibility of death from electric shock doesn't depend entirely on the voltage of the power supply. It also depends on the resistance of the human body. Your body's "resistance" to current depends on a number of things, most importantly, how damp your skin is. Everyone's skin has some moisture in it. The more moisture, the more current flows through you. That's why you are in greater danger of electrical injury when you are working in damp weather or are sweating. Body resistance is lowered when you work in wet areas or sweat heavily; electricity can then flow easily through vital regions of the body. When you work in a wet area, near a water pipe, grounded tank, or reinforcing rods that may be grounded, be extra careful to keep yourself as dry as possible. Stand on a wooden platform or wear rubber boots. In places where tools may become wet, use only tools that are designed for that type of service.

Rules to Live By:

Keep portable electric tools in good condition through the use of a regular inspection program. It is your responsibility to inspect your tools prior to use. Check both tools and cords and clearly tag and turn in any tool that needs repair as soon as you see any defect. If someone else has come in contact with a circuit, the first thing to do is break the circuit by disconnecting the electrical supply. Never touch a person who is in contact with a live circuit. The more you understand about electrical grounding, the less likely you are to suffer an injury. Take the time to make sure your tools and equipment are properly grounded and insulated. Being careless or hasty with electricity can lead to a shocking experience.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters – They Save Lives!

The GFCI is a fast-acting circuit breaker that detects small imbalances in the circuit by electric current leaking to the ground. When this condition occurs, the device breaks

the circuit within a fraction of a second, stopping the flow of electricity. The GFCI matches the amount of current flowing to an electrical device with the returning current. Whenever the GFCI perceives a difference between two to five milliamps, the current flow is stopped within a fraction of a second. It shuts off electricity, thereby protecting workers from grounding and insulation-related shocks. GFCIs do have limitations, however. If an employee contacts two hot wires or a hot and a neutral so there is a direct line-to-line contact, a shock will still occur.

False Trips:

Some contractors complain that GFCIs often have "false trips." False trips are often caused by moisture. Limiting the exposure of tools, cords and connectors is a good way to prevent moisture. The use of multiple tools and long extension cords may also cause a shared GFCI to sense a cumulative leakage and trip. Use more GFCIs and shorter cords to alleviate the problem.

OSHA requires that construction employers protect workers from the hazard of ground-fault-caused electrocution. Two methods are recommended, but many contractors use both. GFCIs may be used on construction sites for receptacle outlets that are not a permanent part of the wiring of a building or structure. The alternative to GFCIs is implementation of an assured equipment grounding program. OSHA only exempts tools and equipment plugged directly into the permanent wiring of a building or structure from GFCI requirements. Receptacles on the ends of extension cords are not considered part of the permanent wiring. If an extension cord is used between the tool or equipment and the permanent building outlet, a GFCI is required.

Assured Equipment Grounding Program:

The assured grounding program must be implemented by a competent person. It will include a written program that covers the documented inspection of all cord sets, receptacles that are not part of the building or structure, and equipment connected by cord and plug that is available for use or used by employees. Their written program must be at the job site and will be reviewed by OSHA during an inspection.