

What is Your Safety Plan for 2019?

I am sure that most companies already have their strategic business plan mapped out for 2019. In addition, many construction companies use the “slower” months at the start of the year for planning and preparation for the “busy” season, that seems to take up the rest of the year in the construction industry. Your 2019 Safety Plan should be no different. Things like safety budget allocation, safety program review and safety training, planning and scheduling should be mapped out as well.

Many OSHA Standards require an annual or periodic review of companies written programs. Some examples are Confined Space Hazard Communication, Respiratory Protection, Lockout Tagout (Control of Hazardous Energy) and Personal Protective Equipment.

What are your safety training priorities for the new year? Over the years OSHA and other safety and health-based organizations have developed many awareness and themed-based programs designed to help companies focus on various aspects of safety. Below is a list of a few:

National Ladder Safety Month – March
National Work Zone Awareness Week-
 April 8-12, 2019
National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction, - May 6-10, 2019
National Electric Safety Month - May

SLOPE IT, SHORE IT, SHIELD IT

Campaign to focus on Trench Safety Awareness

NUCA Trench Safety Stand Down, June 17-21, 2019

National Safety Month - June
Safe and Sound Week, in August 2019

National Preparedness Month –
Preparing Your Workplace for An Emergency – September 2019

National Fire Prevention Month -
 October

Water. Rest. Shade. – OSHA Campaign to keep workers safe in the heat

Some safety training is required upon initial hire of new employees, some annually and some as needed based on workplace hazards and exposures. For specific requirements, you will need to reference the OSHA standards that apply to your work setting. Safety training needs to be customized around these requirements. Training topics to considered include, Hazard Communication, Emergency Evacuation Plans, Personal Protective Equipment, Trenching and Shoring, Electrical Safety, LOTO, Confined Space, Fall Protection, Scaffolding, Health Hazards such as Silica, Lead, Asbestos, Bloodborne Pathogens, First Aid, just to name a few. By no means is this list meant to be all-inclusive.

Bottom line, as you start off 2019, your safety program needs to have the same level of care, planning and consideration as the other aspects of your company’s strategic plan.



Winter Safety, Avoiding Slips, Trips and Falls

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently announced that slips, trips and falls accounted for nearly 849 workplace fatalities in 2016. Slips, trips and falls happen year-round, of course, but winter ice and snow create a more hazardous environment that increases the risk of worker injuries. A proactive safety plan that specifically addresses slips, trips and falls not only enhances worker safety but also minimizes potential costs from workers' compensation payments, government fines or equipment/facility remediation requirements.

Snow removal companies often allow snow and other debris to build up in areas, which directly are in employees' pathways or otherwise obstruct a safe pathway. The parking lot needs to be addressed as many winter falls occur when someone is getting in/out of his/her car or walking toward a cleared sidewalk.

This oversight, or simply the reliance on de-icing efforts alone, creates more potential hazards. In other words, there needs to be eyes on the parking areas, outside break areas and walkways at all times.

Here are six simple tips to avoid slips, trips and falls during the winter season:

1. Keep walkways, stairways and other work areas clear.
2. Remove hazards, such as water on floors and snow on sidewalks, immediately.
3. When walking, look where you are going and have your hands ready to steady yourself should you slip.
4. Avoid carrying heavy loads that may compromise your balance.
5. Mark hazardous areas. Use temporary signs, cones, barricades or floor stands to warn passing workers.
6. Outside, wear footwear with heavy treads for increased traction. Walk along grassy areas if a walkway is covered in ice. Make yourself visible to drivers by wearing a brightly colored jacket or clothes.

Add a Layer of Protection to Your Bottom Line

Even the most well-designed safety programs ultimately will be ineffective without active participation. General guidelines include these standard safety precautions:

- Identify potential slip, trip and fall hazards in your workplace: review incident records, inspect locations and consider the impact of changing environmental conditions.
- Evaluate the potential risk of each hazard: number of employees who could be affected, the potential frequency of risk and the potential impact of the surrounding area or equipment.
- Determine controls that can be instituted to reduce each hazard: relocating or removing dangerous environmental factors, limiting accessibility to higher-risk areas and providing appropriate footwear or personal protective equipment.
- Regularly review the work environment: maintain regular housekeeping, ensure good lighting and keep equipment in proper working condition.

