Safety Matters

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News & Notes

COLD FACTS

Did you know?

- ❄ Cold conditions add hazards to normal safety concerns on the job.
- ❄ It's not just low temperatures, but also wind and water that workers need to be warned about. For example, when the air temperature of wind is 40 degrees F (4 degrees C) and its velocity is 35 mph, exposed skin receives conditions equivalent to the still-air temperature being 11 degrees F (-11 degrees C).
- ❄ Wet conditions also increase the hazards of cold temperatures beyond the actual thermometer reading.

These precautions are recommended:

- ➔ Wear at least three layers of clothing.
  - —An outer layer, such as GORE-TEX®, to break the wind
  - —A middle layer of down or wool to absorb sweat and provide insulation
  - —An inner layer of cotton or synthetic weave to allow ventilation
- ➔ Wear a hat. Considerable heat escapes the body from the head.
- ➔ Keep a change of dry clothing available in case work clothes become wet.
- ➔ Wear loose rather than tight clothing for better ventilation.
- ➔ Follow work practices, including:
  - —Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
  - —Schedule work during the warmer parts of the day.
  - —Take breaks out of the cold.
  - —Work in pairs.
  - —Avoid fatigue.
  - —Consume warm, high-calorie food.

"All I hear is, 'It's too cold, it's too cold..." There's only one of you who never complains!"

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

I dig out tiny caves and store gold and silver in them. I also build bridges of silver and make crowns of gold. They are the smallest you could imagine. Sooner or later everybody needs my help yet many people are afraid to let me help them. Who am I?

Answer on page 2 Safety Bits and Pieces

Cold Comfort

Stay warm and safe

How cold is too cold? Cold stress can occur when the body is unable to warm itself. This can lead to tissue damage and possibly death. Four factors contribute to cold stress:

1. Cold air temperatures
2. High-velocity air movement
3. Dampness of the air
4. Contact with cold water or surfaces

A cold environment forces the body to work harder to maintain its temperature. Cold air, water, and snow all draw heat from the body. It should be stressed that while below-freezing conditions and inadequate protection can bring about cold stress, problems can also occur with much higher temperatures, even in the 50s, when coupled with rain and wind.

The most common cold-induced problems are hypothermia, frostbite, and trench foot.

Hypothermia occurs when body heat is lost faster than it can be replaced. When the core body temperature drops from the normal 98.6°F to around 95°F, symptoms generally begin. The person may begin to shiver and stomp the feet in order to generate heat. Workers may lose coordination, experience slurred speech, and fumble with items in their hands. The skin will likely be pale and cold. As the body temperature falls, symptoms will worsen and shivering will stop. At a body temperature of below 85°F, severe hypothermia will develop and the person may become unconscious; at 78°F, death can occur. Treatment depends on the severity of the hypothermia.

Frostbite occurs when the skin actually freezes and loses water. In severe cases, amputation of the frostbitten area may be required. Frostbite usually affects the extremities. The affected body part will be cold, tingling, stinging, or aching, followed by numbness. The skin turns red in color, then purple, then white, and is cold to the touch. In severe cases, there may be blisters.

Trench foot, or immersion foot, is caused when the feet are immersed in cold water for long periods of time. It is similar to frostbite, but considered less severe. Symptoms include tingling, itching, or a burning sensation.

SAFETY TIPS OF THE MONTH

Practice these refrigeration tips:

- Refrigerate or freeze meat and poultry the minute you get home from the store.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator; under cold, running water; or in a microwave right before cooking.
- Make it a weekly habit to throw out expired foods that you no longer should eat.
- Date leftovers so you know how long they've been in the refrigerator. A good rule to follow is to discard cooked leftovers after four days.

New Year, New Vow

Make safety a full-time habit

January's always a good time to recommit ourselves to various personal and professional commitments. Use this list to recommit to safety basics:

* Know the hazards of your job.
* Always follow safety rules and procedures.
*Use personal protective equipment (PPE) that's assigned to you.
*Pay attention to safety training and apply what you learn on the job.
*Keep on the lookout for hazards, and keep asking yourself what could go wrong while you work.
*Eliminate or report any hazards you see right away.
*Pay attention to warning signs and do what they tell you.
*Know when you might be exposed to hazardous chemicals and take precautions to protect yourself.
*Read labels, warnings, material safety data sheets (MSDSs), and other safety information before you start a job.
*Practice good housekeeping at all times.
*Report any injury, illness, accident, or near miss to your supervisor immediately.

Remember, when it comes to safety, there's no such thing as a dumb question. If you're not sure about a potential hazard or how to do your job safely, ask your supervisor. Don't perform a task unless you know how to perform it safely!

Safety Bits & Pieces

INVISIBLE KILLER

Radon is an invisible, tasteless, odorless gas. It's also a cancer-causing, radioactive gas that kills 20,000 Americans every year, usually from lung cancer. In fact, radon exposure is second only to smoking in causing lung cancer.

Radon in the air comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. In the home, radon typically moves up through the ground through cracks and other holes in the foundation and gets trapped inside where it can build up. It's estimated that nearly 1 out of every 15 homes in the United States has elevated radon levels.

The only way to know if a home has a radon problem is to test. There are many kinds of low-cost, do-it-yourself radon test kits or you can hire a qualified tester to do the job. But before you hire anyone, contact the State of Delaware's Radon Office at the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services for a list of qualified testers.

Radon reduction systems can reduce radon levels in a home by up to 99 percent. The most common method is a vent pipe system and fan, which pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside. This system is known as a "soil suction radon reduction system" and doesn't require major changes to the home. Sealing foundation cracks and other openings makes this kind of system more effective and cost-efficient. Similar systems can also be installed in houses with crawl spaces. Radon contractors can use other methods that may also work in your home. The right system depends on the design of your home and other factors.

January is **National Radon Action Month** so get your home tested.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH ANSWER

I am a dentist.

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

"Adversity can be many things according to just when it hits you and under what conditions. Whatever it may be for you, if you have suffered setbacks, hardships, or failures, know that you are not alone. Very few things are true all of the time in all situations, but this is a universal truth: Plans do not become achievements, dreams do not become realities, and ideas do not come to fruition without setbacks, hardships, and failures."

BARRY J. FARBER
Diamond Power

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE...

A man was jumped in an alley by two muggers. He put up heroic resistance, but was eventually overpowered and the attackers went through his pockets. They didn't find much.

"You mean you fought like that for 48 cents?" said the mugger to the man.

"Is that all you wanted?" said the man, relieved.

"I thought you were after the 500 dollars in my shoe!"

From the State of Delaware's Office of Highway Safety...

Phone Hands Free

Beginning January 2nd, the new law restricting cell phone use goes into effect. That means that drivers will not be allowed to talk without using a hands free device. In addition, anyone who reads, writes, or sends text messages, email, or uses the internet while driving can be ticketed at least $50 for the first offense. And the subsequent penalties are even higher.

This is considered a primary offense meaning officers will be able to pull you over specifically for violating this new law. There are a couple of exceptions you may want to be aware of. Police and other emergency personnel may use cell phones in the course of their official duties as needed. In addition those that work for companies with two way radios fix-mounted in their fleet of vehicles may use those to communicate for business purposes.

The solutions are simple. Really.

- Don't text and drive
- Use a wireless device
- Focus your attention on driving

If you follow these simple tips and follow the rules of the road, you won't have to worry about unnecessary fines. For more information about distracted driving, visit our website at www.ohs.delaware.gov.

Phone Hands Free. Arrive Alive DE.