Safety Matters

Produced by the Insurance Coverage Office

State of Delaware **Issue LXXVII** **January 2013**

Back Safety FAQs

How to take good care of your back

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Because your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand, and work, it's essential to take good care of it. Here are some frequently asked questions and answers about back safety that can help you avoid a painful injury.

Q: What causes back problems?

A: A number of things:

- ⇨ **Poor physical condition.** If your back muscles are weak or if you've put on a few pounds, your back must work harder. Making your back work harder can lead to back pain.
- ⇨ **Poor posture.** Standing, sitting, or lying incorrectly will put strain on your spine. Your spine is designed to operate best in its natural "S" shape.
- ⇨ **Aging.** As we age, the muscles in our backs lose their strength and ability to function.
- ⇨ **Tension and stress.** Tight and knotted muscles, which are caused by tension and stress, can cause muscle spasms and back pain.

Q: What can I do to keep my back healthy?

A: You can:

- ⇨ **Exercise** to strengthen your back and reduce stress. Having strong back and stomach muscles is important in order to ease the work your back is put through each day.
- ⇨ **Lose excess weight.** Excess weight exerts extra force on back and stomach muscles. By losing weight, you can reduce strain and pain in your back.
- ⇨ **Maintain good posture.** You can prevent many back injuries by learning to sit and stand correctly. The best way to sit is straight, with your back against the back of the chair. Keep your feet flat on the floor and your knees slightly higher than your hips. Stand tall with your head up and shoulders back.
- ⇨ **Lift correctly.** The proper lifting procedure involves testing the load, knowing exactly where you are taking and depositing the load, and lifting with your legs not your back while keeping your back in a neutral position.

Q: When carrying a load, is it OK to turn or twist my back as long as I turn my torso?

A: No. Minimize any turning or twisting. If you must turn while carrying a load, turn your feet in the direction you want to go, rather than twisting your upper body.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Pump Up the Tires

A common misconception is that lowering air pressure in snow and "hot weather" will improve traction. The opposite is true: under-inflated tires are more likely to blow out, cause hydroplaning and come off the rims. It is recommended that we should keep our tires inflated to the maximum according to the manufacturer's instruction for safer driving and longer tread wear.

News & Notes

PROTECTING YOUR HEARING

Did you know that no matter what your age may be it's not too soon, or too late, to protect your hearing, one of your five vital senses. Here are some easy ways to protect your hearing:

* Get some quiet, if only for a short time, and give your ears a rest. Whether you're working with loud equipment, listening to music or watching TV, turn off the noise and have a few minutes of quiet time.

* Check your headset. High volume can cause permanent hearing damage. Turn it down if you can't hear people speaking to you. Never turn volume up to block out noisy surroundings. Seriously limit high-volume listening.

* Move back from the stage. At a concert, music club or karaoke bar, take a seat that is a safe distance away from amplifiers and speakers.

* Spend less time in loud environments. Whether it's a construction zone, a party with loud music, or a stock car race track, the longer you stay, the harder it is on your hearing. Any time you have to shout to be heard, it's too loud. Avoid loud music in the car.

* Wear hearing protection. When you know an event will be loud, wear foam, silicone or premolded earplugs. They are all effective because they must have a noise reduction minimum of 9 decibels. Wear them while using the garden tractor or lawnmower, chain saw, air compressor or any loud equipment.

* High fidelity protections reduce all frequencies equally. Several brands are available which permit you to hear all the highs and lows in an entire jam session while your ears receive up to 20 decibels of noise protection, and they are comfortable to wear. Users say the music is more enjoyable.

"And you say you last saw him in the clothes dryer?"

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

I tower over the man-made plain
With peaks scraping the heavens...
I have many brothers like me
As many as a hundred and seven...
I hold inside that which has been...

Answer on Page 2 Safety Bits & Pieces

Safety Bits & Pieces

SAFETY REMINDERS WHEN CLEANING

While performing cleaning tasks of any kind follow these recommendations:

* Wear slip-resistant shoes, long sleeves, long pants and work gloves.
* When using chemicals to clean surfaces, read the manufacturer's advice on how to mix them. Stay in well-ventilated areas. Wash hands before smoking or eating and between tasks.
* If you are going to be involved in heavy lifting, material handling and repetitive motions, to avoid back strain, stretch before, during and after work. Take short breaks throughout the day and rotate your tasks. Know how to lift properly using your legs, not your back.
* Hand trucks, rolling buckets and housekeeping carts should be kept in good condition with easy-rolling wheels. Keep the load in front of you and push it, leaning in the direction you are going. Pulling can lead to strains. Watch for people, obstacles, slopes and drop-offs.
* Do floor maintenance when fewer people are around. Always place caution signs for wet floors and spills.
* Mopping and sweeping are repetitive motions. Avoid a tight grip and use proper posture.
* Never reach into a garbage can or garbage bag. It may contain broken glass, blood or body fluids. Never pack it down with your feet.
* If you spot a hazard, place a warning sign there and report it immediately.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH ANSWER:
Pyramids

"Happy newt year."

Foot Hazard Alert!

Are you wearing the right shoes to work?

Regardless of your job, your shoes are an important safety feature. Depending on the hazards you face at work, you may need safety shoes or other special protective footwear to protect your feet. Consider these workplace foot hazards:

- ⇨ **Heavy falling or rolling objects** can break bones in your foot.
- ⇨ **Slippery or wet floor surfaces** can cause you to slip and fall if you're not wearing shoes with slip-resistant soles.
- ⇨ **Hazardous or hot substances** can burn your feet.
- ⇨ **Sharp objects on the floor** can puncture your feet if they are able to penetrate the sole of your shoe.
- ⇨ **Large, powerful equipment** can mangle a foot if it gets caught in the machine's moving parts.
- ⇨ **Electrical current** can give you a shock if you come in contact with live electrical parts in footwear that conducts electricity, such as shoes with metal toecaps or insoles.
- ⇨ **Solid stationary objects** such as equipment, table legs, etc., can cause injuries if you stub your toes or bang your feet against them in flimsy shoes that offer inadequate foot and toe protection.

Make sure you're wearing the right kind of shoes or other protective footwear at work to protect against the foot hazards in your job.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

A grandmother was surprised one morning when her grandson, age 7, brought her a cup of coffee. It tasted awful, but she drank it. Then, she saw three little uniformed army men at the bottom and asked why he put them there.
The grandson said, "Grandma! It says on TV that, "The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup!"

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH
"Be master of your petty annoyances and conserve your energies for the big, worthwhile things. It isn't the mountain ahead that wears you out, it's the grain of sand in your shoe."
Robert Service (1874 - 1958)
British poet and writer

JANUARY IS NATIONAL RADON ACTION MONTH
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Radon causes lung cancer. Have your home checked today.

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

Fans Don't Let Fans Drive Drunk

Is the only thing that makes a cold winter day worthwhile the thought of being inside, watching the big game? This is an exciting time of the year for football fans. Whether your team is in it or not, many people just enjoy getting together on weekends at a friend's house or sports bar to watch the games. While you are gearing up for the Playoffs, remember Fans Don't Let Fans Drive Drunk.
To avoid unnecessary penalties and stay safe on the night of the big game, make the following safety tips part of your playbook:

If you are having friends over:

- Before kickoff, make sure all of your guests have a sober designated driver for the ride home.
- Serve plenty of high protein foods like meat and cheese, or sandwiches and avoid the chips – salty snacks make people want to drink more.
- Provide non-alcoholic drink alternatives - soft drinks, juice, and water.
- Stop serving alcohol at the end of the third quarter of the game (just like NFL stadiums).

If you are watching at a friend's house, sports bar, or restaurant:

- Designate a sober driver before you leave home or volunteer to be one yourself.
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol too fast or on an empty stomach. Pace yourself—eat foods rich in protein, take breaks, and alternate with non-alcoholic drinks.
- Never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive while impaired.

Drive Sober. Arrive Alive DE.
For more information on this and other traffic safety programs, go to **www.ohs.delaware.gov.**