Safety Matters

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Don't Drink and Work

Stop substance abuse in the workplace

This month is **Alcohol Awareness Month,** which is a good time to talk about the problem of workplace substance abuse. Workplace use of alcohol and drugs is a problem that costs American businesses more than $100 billion annually, according to the U.S. government. If that figure sounds high, consider these statistics:

- Most substance abusers are employed.
- Substance abusers are 2.5 times more likely to be absent 8 or more days a year than other employees.
- Between 30% and 50% of all workers' comp claims are related to substance abuse. (Abusers file 3 to 5 times as many claims as other workers.)
- Substance abusers incur 300 percent higher medical costs than nonabusers.

It's estimated that close to 10 percent of the U.S. population over the age of 12 has a substance abuse problem. Among full-time employees with substance abuse problems, those ages 18 to 25 have the highest rates. However, lots of older workers have dependence problems, too—particularly alcohol dependence.

Employees who work under the influence are three times more likely to have accidents than other employees. And, sometimes, when they have an accident, they're not the only one hurt. They may injure co-workers, too. Alcohol can impair:

- Judgment
- Coordination
- Reaction time

Whether it's getting behind the wheel of a company vehicle, operating a piece of equipment, handling hazardous chemicals, or climbing a ladder, any impairment can be dangerous—even deadly. Just imagine the havoc an impaired forklift operator could cause. Or imagine what could happen to a worker who has had a few drinks and is working high up on a scaffold or a powered platform.

This April, pay attention to the statistics regarding substance abuse in the workplace ... so that you don't become a statistic yourself! Be aware of the risks of working under the influence and the damage that alcohol can cause in both your personal and professional lives.

SAFETY TIPS OF THE MONTH

Follow these safety tips to avoid being one of the more than 60,000 people treated in emergency rooms each year for lawn-mower injuries:

- Rake before you mow to prevent any stones and loose debris from launching into the air.
- Never operate a mower in your bare feet, sandals or flip-flops.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing; always wear hearing protection.
- When refueling your mower, make sure the engine is off and cool. Don't spill gasoline on a hot engine as it may ignite. Don't smoke while pouring gasoline.
- Never leave your mower operational while unattended.
- Don't use electrical mowers on wet grass.

News & Notes

SELF-DIAGNOSIS

Most people with a drinking problem aren't aware of it or are in denial. Use this check-list to help you recognize a drinking problem in yourself or others:

Do you:

- ❑ Lose time from work because of drinking?
- ❑ Want a drink in the morning?
- ❑ Want a drink at the same time every day?
- ❑ Have trouble sleeping?
- ❑ Drink to feel more confident or outgoing?
- ❑ Become frustrated easily?
- ❑ Feel anxious and sensitive?
- ❑ Drink alone?
- ❑ Let family or job responsibilities slide because of drinking?
- ❑ Forget what happened while you were drinking?
- ❑ Have major mood swings?
- ❑ Feel remorse after drinking?
- ❑ Have financial problems because of drinking?
- ❑ Find yourself losing weight without dieting or exercising?
- ❑ Believe others are to blame for your problems?
- ❑ Worry that drinking is affecting your reputation?
- ❑ Feel less ambitious since you've been drinking?
- ❑ Drink to escape from problems?
- ❑ Drink with people or in places you'd otherwise avoid?
- ❑ Find your home life is more unhappy because of drinking?
- ❑ Believe your job is in jeopardy due to drinking?

Several answers of "often" or "sometimes" may be an indication that alcohol may be hurting you or a co-worker—as well as creating serious on-the-job safety risks.

"Don't drink on the job? And how am I supposed to follow *that* rule?"

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

In Spring I look happy decked in comely array. In Summer more clothing I wear. When colder it grows I fling off my clothes and in Winter, quite naked appear. What am I?

Answer on page 2 Safety Bits and Pieces

Safety Bits and Pieces

PNEUMATIC TOOL PRECAUTIONS

Pneumatic tools are powered by compressed air, which gives them the necessary power to do many jobs easily. Generally, you can use pneumatic, or air-powered, tools to nail, tack, or staple materials such as wood, roofing, and insulation.

Common air-powered hand tools also include buffers, grinders, riveting guns, sanders, and jackhammers. All these tools have enormous speed and power— that makes them very effective but also very dangerous.

Take these safety steps:

- ➔ Always use your assigned personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect your eyes and face, head, feet, and ears.
- ➔ Post warning signs so co-workers can keep out of the danger area or wear PPE.
- ➔ Avoid prolonged use of vibrating pneumatic tools that can lead to "white fingers" and produce pain, tingling, and numbness in the hands.
- ➔ Always use work gloves and take frequent, short breaks between periods of pneumatic tool use to reduce the risks.
- ➔ Select tools that have been ergonomically designed to improve the operator's safety and comfort without reducing the power of the tool.

Also, remember the power of compressed air and always follow these precautions:

- ➔ Never point a fastening tool or an air hose at anyone—including yourself.
- ➔ Get a good grip on the handle and press the muzzle against the work surface while you use it.
- ➔ Don't use compressed air to clean off your clothes or other surfaces.
- ➔ Never operate a tool if its hose shows any sign of cuts, bulges, or abrasion.
- ➔ Disconnect the tool when it's not in use to prevent an accidental start-up.

Use pneumatic tools to take advantage of their power, but always protect yourself by following safety rules.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY NIGHT'S SLEEP

1). Develop a routine
2). Create an atmosphere that helps you sleep - maintain a comfortable temperature, control the noise and manage the light
3).Don't use electronics while in bed (laptop, TV, etc.)
4). Don't stay in bed when you can't sleep. Get up and read, have a cup of herbal tea or engage in a relaxing behavior.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH ANSWER

I am a tree.

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

Underage Drinking

As a parent, I have a lot of things that I have to think about to keep my kids safe and our family life in balance. I'm sure you do, too.

Their safety should never take the back seat – especially when it comes to the issue of underage drinking. And it begins earlier than you think. Approximately 19% of 8th graders reported drinking in a recent survey conducted by the University of Delaware. For 11th graders that number increased to 37%!

In 2009, did you know…?

- · 4 teens were killed in alcohol-related crashes.
- · Over 1,000 more teens were injured.
- · 314 minors were arrested for DUI

Talking about alcohol use should start early, and the discussions should happen often. Not a one- time conversation, but an on-going conversation. Our friends at MADD have done all the homework for us. Go to www.madd.org/powerofparents for a free parent handbook with tips on how to talk to your kids about alcohol. And for more information about Underage Drinking in Delaware, go to www.ohs.delaware.gov/underagedrinking.

Under 21? Think Don't Drink. Arrive Alive DE.

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

"I cannot believe that the purpose of life is to be happy. I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be compassionate. It is, above all to matter, to count, to stand for something, to have made some difference that you lived at all."

Leo Rosten (1908 - 1997)
American Teacher, Humorist and Writer

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE...

King Ozymandias of Assyria was running low on cash after years of war with the Hittites. His last great possession was the Star of the Euphrates, the most valuable diamond in the ancient world. Desperate, he went to Croesus, the pawnbroker, to ask for a loan. Croesus said, "I'll give you 100,000 dinars for it."

"But I paid a million dinars for it," the King protested. "Don't you know who I am? I am the king!"

Croesus replied, "When you wish to pawn a Star, makes no difference who you are."

Take Control

Manage stress at work

People often feel the most stressed when they are not in control of their daily activities—and this happens most frequently at work. Take control of your work routine by following these stress-reducing tips:

- ➢ **Plan.** Control your time by taking the first 5 minutes to lay out your day's work and the last 5 minutes to plan tomorrow's work. Of course, unexpected situations may arise, but working them into your plan as much as possible will help you feel more in control and less stressed.
- ➢ **Organize.** Control your work space and environment by keeping it neat and organized.
- ➢ **Itemize.** Control large projects by breaking them down into smaller tasks that you can tackle one at a time.
- ➢ **Separate.** Control your work/life balance by leaving work at work. Use your ride home to switch into family and personal gears.

Follow these tips to reduce the stress of feeling out of control on the job. Manage stress by taking control of your work and your time.