Safety Matters

Produced by the Insurance Coverage Office

State of Delaware **Issue XLVI** **June 2010**

Lightning Precautions

One hazard of summer weather is lightning, which has been the #2 weather killer in the United States over the past 30 years. In fact lightning kills more people than hurricanes and tornadoes combined.

Understand that no place OUTSIDE is safe during a thunderstorm. Being caught outside with no safe shelter is a severe emergency. Follow these suggestions, which won't protect you but may improve your odds:

- Do not seek shelter under tall, isolated trees.
- Do not seek shelter under partially enclosed buildings or in tents.
- Stay away from metal objects, such as fences, poles, or golf clubs.
- Stay away from water.
- Find the lowest spot around and crouch down.

The SAFEST location is a fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing. Such buildings are safe because of their wiring and plumbing. Unsafe buildings include picnic or beach shelters, large outdoor tents, or other buildings that do not have electricity or plumbing.

The second safest location is a hard-topped car, SUV, bus, or other hard-topped vehicle. Do not seek shelther in a soft-topped convertible. Close all the windows and doors and do not touch any metal surfaces.

If someone is struck by lightning, call 911 or your local emergency number to get immediate medical care. You are in no danger of an electrical charge if you touch a lightning victim or administer CPR.

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

Under 21. Think Don't Drink.

Prom, graduation, senior week, summer vacation! It is an exciting time for teens and parents. However, it can also be a dangerous time for teens as there is often reduced parental supervision and easier access to alcohol. That's why the Office of Highway Safety is asking that if you know someone who is under 21, remind them to **Think Don't Drink**.

Last year in Delaware four teens, ages 16-20, were killed in alcohol-related crashes and an astonishing 75 more were injured according to State Police statistics. Not only is consuming alcohol illegal for those under the age of 21, but it can also cause health problems in developing young minds and bodies. Every year, approximately 5,000 minors across the nation die as a result of underage drinking. This includes motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides, and injuries such as falls, burns and drowning.

So where do minors most often get access to alcohol? According to studies by the University of Delaware, 31% of teens reported that they got alcohol from their parents, and 49% said they got it from a non-parent over age 21. With fines and penalties for both the minor who chooses to drink and the adult who provides it, ask yourself, is the risk really worth it? Think Don't Drink. Arrive Alive DE.

News & Notes

BEAT THE ODDS

The odds of an average person being a lightning casualty over your lifetime are about 3,000 to 1. Those are pretty good odds. But you can make them even better by following the 30-30 rule.

Here's how:

1. **Watch for dark skies,** threatening clouds, or increasing winds, even if it is not raining.
2. **When you see lightning, count the seconds** until you hear thunder.
3. **If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within 6 miles** of where you are and is dangerous. You are close enough to be struck.
4. **Seek shelter immediately.**
5. **Wait at least 30 minutes** after the last clap of thunder before leaving shelter.
6. **Don't be fooled** by sunshine or blue sky!

Furthermore, be smart by being prepared when you participate in outdoor summer activities:

- Listen to weather forecasts—have a radio with you—and plan ahead for possible shelter in case of a thunderstorm.
- Know that lightning is most likely to occur in hot, humid, summer weather, during the late afternoon or early evening.

"It says: *In a lightning storm, don't seek shelter under a tall...* Oh crud!"

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Summer means yard work. When mowing, keep small children out of the yard, and turn the mower off if children enter the area. If the lawn slopes, mow across the slope with the walk-behind rotary mower, never up and down. With a riding mower, drive up and down the slope, not across it. Wear gloves, safety glasses/goggles, ear protection and any other appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Never carry children on a riding mower.

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

1). What bird always runs from a fight?
2). What did the paintbrush say to the floor?
3). What happened when the chimney got angry?
4). What happens if an axe falls on your car?

Answers on page 2 Safety Bits & Pieces

Safety Bits & Pieces

GOT A PLAN?

Lifting begins with planning. Before moving any object, examine the load to ensure:

- **The weight is stable** and won't shift.
- **There are no rough spots** or sharp edges—if there are, wear a pair of thick gloves.
- **You can handle it alone—**if you cannot, get help.
- **You'll be able to see over the load** while carrying—if not, use material handling equipment or make a couple of trips.

Also, plan the route you'll take.

- **Map out the easiest route,** not necessarily the shortest.
- **Move objects along the route** to avoid bumping into or tripping over them.
- **Look for safe places to stop and rest,** if necessary.
- **Ensure the object can be unloaded easily** and safely at the other end.

Once you have a plan, you're ready to proceed. The secret to safe lifting is to:

- **Assume the safe lifting position.** Stand close to the object and keep a wide stance. Keep your feet turned out and your heels down. Squat by bending at the hips and knees. Your ears, shoulders, and hips should form a nearly straight line.
- **Prepare to lift.** Pull the load close to your body and grasp the object firmly. Tighten your stomach muscles.
- **Let the legs do the lifting.** Maintain the natural curves of your spine and rise up from the squatting position using your legs to power the lift. Do not bend over at the neck, shoulders, or waist as you lift.

DID YOU KNOW...

1). Approximately 4,000 Americans die and 20,000 more are injured each year by fire
2). In the U.S., a residential structure fire is reported every 79 seconds and someone is fatally injured in a home fire every 135 minutes
3). Heat produced by fire increases 100 degrees with each foot towards the ceiling - stay low to the ground by crawling
4). You have approximately 1-2 minutes to escape before being overcome by smoke (smoke inhalation)
5). Working smoke detectors reduce the chances of death by 50%
6). Of adult fire fatalities, 50% of the victims were under the influence of alcohol, which impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS

1). A canary, because it is yellow.
2). "One more word and I'll shellac you!"
3). It blew its stack.
4). You have an ax-i-dent (accident).

What a Pain in the Neck!

Use ergonomics to avoid neck strain

Whether you work in an office, on an assembly line, or in a factory, warehouse, or retail establishment, neck pain is a common workplace hazard. Why? Because neck injuries have common causes that stretch across industries, including:

- Reaching and stretching for items
- Constant twisting while performing job tasks
- Adjusting to inaccurate height of work stations
- Repetition of movements that stress the neck
- Prolonged awkward positions
- Forceful, jarring tasks
- Stressful job situations that cause neck tension

How can you avoid neck injuries caused by these situations?

- **Rearrange your workspace** so that items are within reach without stretching, bending, or twisting.
- **Choose the right tool** for the job that minimizes excessive force or awkward positions to complete the task.
- **Alter tasks** to avoid constant repetition of potentially injurious movements.
- **Perform neck and shoulder exercises** regularly to keep your muscles strong and relaxed.
- **Develop stress management techniques** that work for you—such as exercise, quiet time, relaxing hobbies, or time with family and friends—to stay calm during stressful periods.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

"Happiness can come in a single moment. And in a single moment it can go again. But a single moment does not create it. Happiness is created through countless choices made and then made again throughout a lifetime. You are its host as well as its guest. You give it form, shape, individuality, texture, tone. And what it allows you to give can change your world. Happiness can be stillness. But it isn't still. It wraps, enchants, heals, consoles, soothes, delights, calms, inspires and connects. It is on your face and in your body. It is in your life and being."

STEPHANIE DOWRICK, *Choosing Happiness*

Bring It Home

Practice safety on and off the job

June is **Home Safety Month.** What are the top five causes of fatal accidents at home? According to the Home Safety Council, the answer is:

1. Falls
2. Poisoning (ingesting or inhaling toxic substances)
3. Fires
4. Suffocation (often involving choking on food)
5. Drowning

Interestingly, the five leading causes of nonfatal injuries are not the same. Falls still lead the list, and poisoning is Number 5. In between are striking or being struck by an object (Number 2); cuts (Number 3); and overexertion, such as sustaining back injuries and muscle pulls (Number 4).

Make the connection between home safety and work safety. The list of parallels between home hazards and workplace hazards is almost endless. They include tripping and falling, hazardous substances, electric shock, fire, power tools, falling and flying objects, eye injuries, back injuries, and more. Take the same precautions against these hazards at home as you do at work, including reading labels, wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and removing tripping hazards.