Safety Matters

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Shiftwork Safety

Fatigue is a common and dangerous problem

When you're fighting sleep on a late shift, you may actually slip into a zombie-like trance. Although your eyes remain open, you're no longer alert. This is known as Automatic Behavior Syndrome. A person in this condition may be able to perform simple tasks but would be unable to react appropriately to an emergency. Any monotonous task, such as monitoring a control panel or driving on a highway, can lead to Automatic Behavior Syndrome.

Protect yourself by recognizing the symptoms of fatigue so you can wake yourself up. Fatigue symptoms include:

- Irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Difficulty in focusing eyes and difficulty keeping eyes open
- Sluggishness or lack of energy
- Inability to remember the last 5 minutes
- Waves of sleepiness

According to safety experts, you're most at risk for fatigue-related safety problems at these times:

- Between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m.
- Your first two night shifts after working days or after several days off
- Near the end of a shift
- When activity levels are high in your work area
- Driving home after your shift

Wake Up and Be Safe!

Don't let drowsiness cause accidents

Sleep experts say many people don't get enough sleep. Statistics show that as many as 40 percent of Americans say that they've been sleepy enough during the day that it interferes with their daily activities. And that can have a negative impact on workplace safety.

To counteract drowsiness on the job and prevent accidents:

- Take a minibreak and do some stretching exercises right at your workstation.
- Go to the restroom and splash cold water on your face.
- Take a walk during your rest break to help refresh and wake you up.
- Drink a caffeinated beverage.

Avoid tasks that require sharp physical or mental skills when you're very tired. For example, operating machinery, driving a vehicle or forklift, or handling hazardous materials could be dangerous if you're not fully alert.

- Be honest and don't put yourself or others at risk.
- Switch to a less risky task, if possible, until you feel more awake.
- Talk with your supervisor if you're concerned about your abilities—or someone else's. Also talk to your supervisor if you're taking a medication that makes you feel drowsy and could put you or a co-worker at risk.

There's a direct connection between fatigue and accidents. So keep alert!

News & Notes

CELL PHONE SAFETY ON THE ROAD CONTINUES TO MAKE HEADLINES

Here's another study about the hazards of using a cell phone and driving. This one, conducted by University of Utah psychologists, concludes that drivers talking on cell phones are as impaired as a person with the 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level that defines drunk driving in most states. Drivers are far more distracted by talking on a cell phone, the study reports, than by conversing with a passenger in the vehicle.

Using a sophisticated driving simulator, researchers found that drivers using a cell phone drift out of their lane and miss exits more frequently than drivers talking with someone in the vehicle.

Passengers may actually improve safety, says study co-author David Strayer, because the passenger "adds a second set of eyes, and helps the driver navigate and reminds them where to go." Previous studies by the Utah scientists found that hands-free phones were just as distracting as hand-held models because the phone conversation is the biggest driving distraction.

THAT LADDER GOING TO HOLD YOU?

Before you use a ladder check the yellow label on the side. It'll tell you how much weight (you plus your equipment) the ladder can handle. Ladders rated:

- "I-A" hold 300 lb
- "I" hold 250 lb
- "II" hold 225 lb

Don't overload ladders. An overloaded ladder can collapse, and the fall could seriously hurt you or even kill you.

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

1). What happened in 1961 and will not happen again until 6009?

2). Imagine you are in a sinking row boat surrounded by sharks. How would you survive?

3). Eskimos are very good hunters, but they never hunt penguins. Why not?

4). What do you call an oyster that won't share?

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Safety Bits & Pieces

INSURANCE COVERAGE OFFICE(ICO)

Did you know that timely claims reporting saves money? The importance of timely claims reporting (within 24 hours of any incident) cannot be over-emphasized. In reporting incidents the reports should include the date, time, specific location(s), names of injured parties, description of property damaged (if it involves a building please include the rooms or portions of building(s) involved), the extent of the damage or injuries and as complete a description as possible of the cause of loss or injury.

Claims may be reported by phone at 302-739-3651 or 877-277-4185; by fax at 302-739-5345 or via email at inscov@state.de.us. Reporting forms are available on the ICO website at www.inscov.delaware.gov.

SAFETY MYTHS AND FACTS

These are among the most common misconceptions:

MYTH: It won't happen to me.
FACT: An accident can happen to anyone who fails to recognize hazards, fails to take proper precautions, or fails to pay attention while working.
MYTH: Accidents occur according to the law of averages.
FACT: Many workplaces have gone for years and years without having one accident. The law of averages has nothing to do with workplace safety. Accidents don't have to happen. People *let* them happen.
MYTH: Occasional accidents and injuries are just a price of doing business.
FACT: Conducting business is about getting better, being safer, and working smarter. Accepting accidents as a cost of doing business is not acceptable.
MYTH: I'm tough and I don't bruise easily.
FACT: Nobody is so tough that they can get run over by a forklift, mangled by a machine, or poisoned by a toxic chemical and not feel it.
MYTH: I don't really need personal protective equipment (PPE).
FACT: Everybody needs to wear assigned PPE. It's sometimes the only thing standing between you and a life-threatening hazard.

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS:

1). The year reads the same upside down as right side up
2). Quit imagining
3). Eskimos live at the North Pole and penguins live at the South Pole
4). A selfish shellfish

Emergency!

Are you prepared?

This month is **National Preparedness Month** and, of course, preparing for natural disasters and other catastrophic events is the primary reason September was designated for this special event. But let's not forget general workplace emergency preparedness. Whether it's a big catastrophe that affects the whole community or a fire, chemical spill, or other emergency that just affects our workplace, you need to be prepared for difficult situations.

On a community level:

- ➔ Become familiar with your community's emergency evacuation plan.
- ➔ Find out about emergency plans in the schools your children attend.
- ➔ Develop a family emergency plan for evacuating and for sheltering in place.
- ➔ Prepare an emergency kit and renew supplies as necessary.
- ➔ Conduct family emergency drills.

On a workplace level:

- ➔ Make sure you know the assigned evacuation route from your work area.
- ➔ Have an alternate route in case your primary route is blocked by fire, smoke, or other hazardous conditions.
- ➔ Understand procedures for sheltering in place.
- ➔ Be familiar with emergency duties you've been assigned.
- ➔ Know where to find fire alarms, first-aid kits, fire extinguishers, and other emergency supplies and devices.

Safety Tip of the Month

Always wear a pair of splash-proof polycarbonate goggles when jump-starting your car battery. Your goggles should have a Z-87 label on the frame. This means your goggles are certified for use during auto repairs.

Quotation of the Month

"The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference."
Elie Wiesel (9/30/28 -)
Writer and Nobel Laureate

On the Lighter Side...

Todays stock market report:
Helium was up, feathers were down.
Paper was stationary.
Fluorescent tubing was dimmed in light trading.
Knives were up sharply.
Pencils lost a few points.
Hiking equipment was trailing.
Elevators rose, while escalators continued their slow decline.
Weights were up in heavy trading.
Light switches were off.
Shipping lines stayed at an even keel.
The market for raisins dried up.
Diapers remain unchanged.

Slipping Up on Safety...

Can send you on a trip to the hospital

Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common workplace injuries. Here's how to stay on your feet and out of the emergency room.

DO:

- ✓ Pay attention to where you're going and what's in the way.
- ✓ Wear sturdy shoes with nonskid soles, and keep shoelaces tied.
- ✓ Keep aisles, stairs, and walkways clear of tools, materials, and cords.
- ✓ Clean up leaks and spills right away.
- ✓ Block off and mark floor areas being cleaned or repaired.
- ✓ Close drawers when not in use.
- ✓ Stay away from dock and platform edges.
- ✓ Walk slowly, sliding feet and using baby steps, on slippery surfaces.
- ✓ Be extra careful on uneven floors or where the floor level changes.
- ✓ Report any slip or trip hazards you can't eliminate yourself.

DON'T:

- × Don't carry loads you can't see over.
- × Don't run, walk.
- × Don't jump off platforms or loading docks.
- × Don't ignore housekeeping tasks, especially if they involve walking areas.
- × Don't forget to wipe your feet when you come in to work on wet days.