

news & notes

ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE CAN BE DEADLY, BUT IT CAN ALSO BE TREATED

Alcohol abuse can cause big problems.

Health problems:

- Long-term drinking causes damage to the heart, brain, liver, and nervous system.
- Drinking while pregnant can cause birth defects and other problems in the baby.
- Drinking large quantities of alcohol in a short time can cause coma, even death.

Job problems:

- Going to work when under the influence of alcohol puts you and your co-workers at serious risk of accidents and injuries.
- Alcohol abuse can affect your work to the point where you could lose your job and your income unless you seek treatment.

Social and economic problems:

- Aggressive behavior and violence caused by drinking take their toll on family and friends.
- Many heavy drinkers eventually become emotionally and socially isolated and over time lose most of their close relationships.
- People who abuse alcohol and who fail to get help can end up losing everything they've worked for.

But the good news is that people who abuse alcohol can be helped.

- First they must recognize their problem.
- Then, counseling and treatment can help them stop drinking completely and rebuild their lives.

If you or anyone you know has a drinking problem, take it seriously and arrange for proper treatment right away.

SafetyWorks

All Safety Products www.allsafetyproducts.biz May '04

Medication and the Job

How safe are legal drugs in the workplace?

While the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse in the workplace are well known, little attention has been paid to prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications. The fact that these drugs are legal makes them seem safe. Yet some of these medicines can cause serious impairment problems and may interact with other drugs or foods in ways that can jeopardize your safety on the job.

For instance, a study performed by the University of Iowa found that an OTC dose of Benadryl, a common antihistamine, can impair your driving performance at least as much as alcohol. Another OTC medication, Excedrin, used to treat minor aches and pains, contains 65 mg of caffeine per tablet. If combined with coffee drinking, it could cause a good case of the jitters. Stimulants, such as diet pills or stay-awake tablets, may provide an initial energy boost, but they increase the tendency for impulsiveness and risk-taking.

The more potent prescription drugs can cause even stronger reactions. Depressants, such as Valium and Xanax, can slow brain activity and impair thinking and judgment. Breakdown products from depressants can stay in your body for days after use as well, affecting coordination, concentration, and judgment.

What You Can Do

Fortunately there's a lot you can do to protect your safety on the job when you're taking medication:

- Read medication labels carefully.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about possible side effects. Typical impairments include drowsiness, nervousness, or poor sense of balance.
- Ask about possible drug interactions. Some prescription and OTC drugs can interact with foods, beverages, and other medications. For example, you should avoid alcohol if you're taking antihistamines, cough and cold products with the ingredient dextromethorphan, or drugs that treat sleeplessness.
- Talk to your supervisor if you're taking a medication that could affect your fitness to safely perform your job.



"That's either the world's quietest jackhammer, or you've had waaay too much caffeine."



news & notes

DRESS FOR THE OCCASION

When you get dressed each day, you decide what to wear based on your taste, the weather, and the occasion. The weather may dictate a raincoat, a sweater, or sunglasses. The occasion might call for jeans or a suit.

You also have to match what you wear at work to the situation. Among the things that can affect this choice are the hazards you may face on the job.

If you might be exposed to chemicals, you need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) that will protect you from those hazards. For example, you need goggles, gloves, and maybe even a respirator.

If you might be exposed to machine hazards, you need eye protection and maybe also hearing protection. If you might get hit on the head by a falling object, you need to wear a hard hat.

PPE is a personal barrier between you and a particular hazard. It's your *last* line of defense against workplace hazards. Your first line of defense is your good sense and awareness of workplace hazards.

SIT UP STRAIGHT!

Your folks told you, your teachers told you, and now we're telling you—sit up straight! Why? Because if you slouch, the ligaments in your back, not the muscles, have to do all the work—work they are not designed to do. They stretch—and hurt—and put pressure on your vertebrae, which is not good. So do your back a favor, and sit up straight.

Exercise Safely

Safety tips for walkers and runners

Now that spring is here, many people are getting back into outdoor exercise such as walking or running. The Kenilworth, Illinois, police department offers these safety tips if you go out in the early morning or after dark:

- Wear reflective material so cars can see you when the light is poor.
- Run or walk with a friend or a dog, if possible.
- Walk or run against traffic so that you can see approaching cars.
- Keep alert to cars and potential security threats.
- Ignore verbal harassment and keep moving.
- Consider carrying a cell phone.
- Don't wear a radio or CD headset—you won't hear approaching cars or people who may present a threat.
- Follow familiar routes and know which stores are open if you need help.
- Avoid unpopulated areas, poorly lit roads, and deserted streets.
- Keep your distance from parked cars and strangers.
- Be careful if someone in a car asks for directions. Keep at least a full arm's length from the car.
- Watch the road in the early morning light or after dark. Wet or icy spots are harder to see as are potholes and other hazards.
- Change direction and head for an open store or a nearby house if you think you're being followed.

Serious About Solvents

Protect yourself from hazards

Four workers were using a flammable solvent to remove tile glue from a basement floor in Asheville, North Carolina. The workers didn't realize that fumes from the solvent were building up to a dangerous level. Suddenly, a lightbulb attached to a lamp cord fell and broke, sparking an explosion and flash fire that seriously burned the men.

To be sure you're safe when using solvents, take these precautions:

- Read the label and material safety data sheet (MSDS) to uncover the hazards and available protections.
- Wear eye protection, gloves, solvent-resistant protective clothing, and any other required PPE.
- Make sure there is adequate ventilation.
- If you're using flammable solvents, transport them in containers specially designed for flammable liquids.
- Ground and bond containers when transferring flammable solvents.
- Don't smoke or allow open flames or sparks around flammable solvents.
- Keep oxidizers, such as chlorine gas, chromic acid, compressed air, and compressed oxygen, away from flammable solvents.
- Store flammable solvents in safety storage cabinets.
- Don't use chemical solvents to clean your hands.



Be Prepared!

An emergency is no time to hesitate or panic

You have to be able to move quickly and properly if there's an emergency on the job. There won't be time to stop and think about what to do or to ask questions. Now's the time to prepare yourself. Use this checklist:

- ✓ Know how to recognize—and turn in—emergency alarms.
- ✓ Know your responsibilities under the company's emergency action plan.
- ✓ Act quickly but calmly when you hear an alarm.
- ✓ Turn off equipment you're using.
- ✓ Alert co-workers to the emergency.
- ✓ Assist any disabled or injured employees who need help escaping.
- ✓ Leave by your assigned exit—or the closest safe exit if yours can't be used.
- ✓ If you've been assigned any special duties in less-than-disastrous emergencies (such as maintaining power or safely shutting down certain processes), perform your assignment if it is safe to do so until emergency response crews tell you to evacuate.
- ✓ Go to your assigned safe place outside the facility.
- ✓ Don't block the path of emergency response crews or vehicles.
- ✓ Do not go home or leave the area. Stay in your assigned place until a roll call has been conducted so that no one thinks you've been left behind in danger.
- ✓ Follow instructions about where to go—and when.

news & notes

SPRING CLEANING AND SAFETY

If you're thinking of doing spring cleaning in your work area or your home, remember that some cleaning products contain hazardous chemicals, and you may need to take precautions to protect your health.

- Follow label precautions regarding ventilation, dilution, etc.
- Pay attention to health warnings and take recommended precautions, such as wearing gloves or eye protection.
- Always wash thoroughly with soap and water after using cleaning products that contain hazardous chemicals.
- Be especially careful if any of these words appear in the ingredients: acid, caustic, hydroxide, oxide, amine, or ammonia.

THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Energy is essential in our facility, running everything from computers to machinery. It can be:

- Electrical—when current runs through wires or cable
- Hydraulic—when a liquid moves through pipes or hoses
- Pneumatic—in the form of compressed air or pressurized steam or gas
- Mechanical—stored or built up energy in springs

Any type of energy can be a serious safety hazard, especially if it comes on or is released unexpectedly while you are servicing or maintaining equipment. That's why you always need to follow lockout/tagout procedures whenever you are cleaning, clearing, servicing, or repairing machines and other energized equipment.

Alcohol Abuse Quiz

How much do you know about this problem?

Find out by circling T for True or F for False regarding the following statements:

1. Working under the influence only endangers the drinker. T F
2. Alcohol only affects you physically and emotionally if you drink a lot. T F
3. Keep suspicions about a co-worker's alcohol problem to yourself unless you actually see the person drinking on the job. T F
4. The Americans with Disabilities Act protects employees who drink on the job from being discharged, since alcoholism is a disease. T F
5. A person under the influence is more likely to take safety risks than someone who is sober. T F

Answers: (1) F. It also endangers co-workers. (2) F. Even just a few beers can slow reflexes, impair judgment, increase risk-taking behavior, and affect a person emotionally. (3) F. If you don't speak up, you might have to live with the fact that you could have prevented an accident or even saved a life. (4) F. The ADA protects *recovering* alcoholics—those who are currently in treatment, or have been in treatment. It does not protect workers who drink on the job, come to work under the influence, and create safety hazards. (5) T. Those who work under the influence are almost *4 times* more likely to have an accident on the job than workers who are sober.



Computer Safety Quiz

Take steps to prevent workstation woes

Circle T for True and F for False regarding the following statements:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. To prevent glare and keep your neck properly stretched, position your monitor at a 45-degree angle to your keyboard. | T | F |
| 2. Take a short break to stretch every 30 to 60 minutes. | T | F |
| 3. It's best to control the motion of the mouse from your wrist. | T | F |
| 4. Place your monitor so that your eyes are aligned with the lower half of the screen. | T | F |
| 5. Every hour or so take an eye break and look away from the monitor for a minute or so. | T | F |
| 6. Keep your wrists in a neutral position while typing by angling your wrists and turning your hands in. | T | F |

news & notes

SAFE HOUSEKEEPING IS NO ACCIDENT

Good housekeeping prevents workplace accidents. The problem is that too many people fall into the trap of thinking that housekeeping is somebody else's responsibility—for example, their co-workers or the maintenance department.

They think that they don't have to concern themselves with helping to keep their work area clean and neat, or with removing fire hazards, or with making sure that tools and materials aren't left lying around after the job is done.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Safe housekeeping is a group effort. Everyone has to pitch in. How about you? Are you doing your part?

BUT MY JOB ISN'T DANGEROUS ...

Just because your job doesn't appear to be dangerous doesn't mean there aren't hazards. Accidents can happen in any job. So take a minute to stop and think about what the hazards in your job might be. List the hazards and then list the precautions you need to take to keep safe and healthy. Review your lists from time to time and update them whenever there are changes in your job or your work area.

THE BEST PROTECTION IS YOU

The machines and equipment you use on the job come with many built-in safety features, such as guards and controls to protect you from injury. But the best protection is still your own commitment to operating machines and equipment safely.

Answers:

- (1) F. Your monitor should be directly in front of you, about an arm's length away. (2) T (3) F. Control the motion of the mouse from the elbow, keeping your wrist straight. (4) F. Position your monitor so that your eyes are aligned with a point a couple of inches from the top of the screen. (5) F. Take an eye break every 15 minutes or so and look away from the monitor at something about 20 feet away for a minute or so. (6) F. The neutral position means keeping wrists in line with forearms and not angled up or down or turned in or out.



Hunting Hazards

To prevent injuries you must recognize hazards

April is Prevent Injuries America Month. To prevent injuries in the workplace you first have to be aware of the hazards. Hazards vary from area to area, job to job, and sometimes even from day to day. But here are some general hazards everyone should be aware of:

- Most **chemicals** are safe when handled properly. But when proper precautions are not taken, some workplace chemicals can catch fire or explode. Others can cause skin or eye burns. Still others can cause serious health problems.
- The **tools and equipment** you use on the job are designed to prevent injuries. But to do that they must be used properly and be well maintained.
- **Electricity** powers our equipment, but it can also cause fires, shocks, and burns if you don't take the necessary precautions.
- **Housekeeping** is an essential part of a safe workplace. Many injuries are the result of slips, trips, and falls that could have been prevented by a clean, neat work area with everything in its place.
- **Materials handling** can be a hazard if you don't know how to lift and carry properly or if you don't follow safety rules when using mechanical materials handling equipment.

Remember, it's the hazard you don't see that gets you. So go hunting for hazards and stay safe on the job.