



Weekly Safety Meetings

Safety Training for the Construction Industry

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Standard Subscription

COMPANY NAME: _____

Volume 46 Issue 32 August 7, 2023

Avoid Sprains and Strains

Construction work is hard on your body, but that doesn't mean that pain and injuries are unavoidable. There are steps you can take to reduce your chances of suffering injuries that can leave you in pain, permanent discomfort, or keep you off the job.

A **sprain** is a stretched or torn ligament. Sprains can happen when you fall, twist, or get hit. Common sprain areas are ankles and wrists.

A **strain** is a stretched or torn muscle or tendon. Strains can happen quickly, or they can develop over time. You're at risk if your job demands physical exertion or repetitive movements.

Here are some ways you can prevent sprains and strains:

- Get enough sleep, stay hydrated, and eat healthy food. Taking care of yourself helps to reduce fatigue and keep your muscles flexible and strong.
- Warm up before you start working. Start the day with some stretch-and-flex exercises to help limber up your body. Stretch your arms and legs, loosen your neck muscles, reach overhead to stretch your shoulders, do a few squats, and bend forward gently to touch your toes. Warming up reduces your risk for injury by improving blood flow and flexibility.
- Avoid slips, trips, and falls. Keep your eyes on the path ahead as you walk. Keep walkways and work areas clear of debris, tools, and anything else that could trip you or others.

- Know your limits. Don't lift and carry anything over 50 pounds. Instead, ask for help from a co-worker or use a mechanical device like a hand truck. When you do lift, follow safe lifting techniques. Use your legs instead of your back. Keep a stable footing. Don't reach overhead or twist when lifting or carrying an object.
- Practice good posture at work and at home. Use ergonomic tools when possible. Arrange your work area so you don't have to do too much twisting or reaching.
- Make sure your work boots provide ankle support and have good insoles and good treads.
- Take regular breaks to rest, hydrate, and stretch.

Treatment: If you do suffer a sprain or strain, your doctor may tell you to follow the R.I.C.E. protocol for the first 48 hours:

- **R**est the injured area until it's less painful.
- **I**ce the injury by keeping a cold compress on the injured part for 20 minutes every hour or so.
- **C**ompress the injured area with a bandage.
- **E**levate the injured area above the level of your heart to reduce swelling.

Your doctor may advise you to get x-rays, begin exercising or moving the area, or work with a physical therapist.

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SAFETY REMINDER
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Report even minor sprains and strains.

NOTES:

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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Volume 46 Issue 33 August 14, 2023

Confined Space Hazards

Some areas around a jobsite are considered confined spaces. These are tight, small, or cramped areas that are not designed for you to work in for long periods of time. They may include tanks, vessels, storage bins, vaults, tunnels, ductwork, crawl spaces, and attics. They may have limited ways to enter and exit, so it can be hard to get out in an emergency.

A confined space that has specific hazardous conditions is considered a permit-required confined space. Basically, this means the confined space can be deadly if the hazards are not controlled. **OSHA requires you to have a permit when you work in a confined space that presents any of the following hazards:**

- The space contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere.
- The space contains or could contain a material that might engulf someone.
- The space is configured so that a worker could be trapped or suffocated by inwardly-converging walls or a sloping or tapered floor.
- The space contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazards.

Common hazards associated with confined spaces include:

- Poor air quality. Confined spaces rarely have good ventilation, so hazardous gases, vapors, fumes, or sprays can accumulate and make the atmosphere dangerous.

- Physical hazards. You could encounter exposed electrical conductors or unguarded machinery. Poor visibility, uneven surfaces, and other obstacles could cause you to slip, trip, or fall.
- Very high or low temperatures. Think about working in attics in the summer or installing shelves or racks in a commercial freezer. Extreme temperatures can cause heat illness, dehydration, frostbite, and hypothermia.
- Hazardous substances like asbestos, mold, or lead, all of which can damage your health.

Additionally, before you enter a confined space:

- Both the workers entering the confined space and the attendant who monitors the space must have proper training. Don't enter a confined space unless you've had training.
- Put on all the necessary PPE which may include a harness, lifeline, hard hat, eye protection, gloves, and respiratory protection. You may need lighting, a rescue system, and equipment to monitor the air.
- Conduct a risk assessment and make sure you understand the rescue plan. Verify that you can always communicate with the attendant.

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SAFETY REMINDER
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Animal droppings from bats, birds, raccoons, or rats can make any workspace hazardous.

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Volume 46 Issue 34 August 21, 2023

Diggers

Diggers, including backhoes, trackhoes, and excavators, make it easy to dig holes, move soil and rock, cut trenches, clear debris, demolish old structures, and much more. But diggers are as dangerous as they are useful. Operators and nearby workers are exposed to hazards including: equipment tipovers, falls, struck-by accidents, and contact with underground and overhead utilities.

Here are some safe work practices to follow when operating and working around diggers:

- Only operate a digger if you're trained and authorized to operate that specific digger.
- Inspect the machine thoroughly before you start to work. Look for debris in the operator's cab, loose components, and leaking hydraulic lines. Check that the lights, horn, and back-up alarm are all working. Check the tracks and the drive sprockets. Report any issues immediately.
- Look up to see if there are any overhead obstructions. If there are power lines in the area, keep a safe distance away.
- Be aware of underground hazards. Call 811 before you dig to locate utility lines. Watch out for basements, vaults, culverts, and any indication that there's an underground void.
- Don't jump onto or off of the digger. Maintain 3 points of contact when climbing on and off. Keep your boots and the steps free from mud, oil, and grease.
- Once you're in the cab, put on your seat belt, adjust the mirrors, and check the controls so you know they're functioning properly. Move the machine a few feet forward and backward to make sure everything's working. Report any problems including warning lights on the dashboard and any new or unusual noises.
- Keep the bucket low when you're driving. Be very careful when driving or working on slopes. Drive straight up slopes; don't go up diagonally. Never let anyone ride in the bucket or anywhere else on the machine.
- Keep spoil piles away from the excavation. Keep the machine a safe distance from the edges of trenches and from workers and other equipment.
- When loading trucks, swing the bucket over the rear of the truck, not over the cab.
- Keep a sharp eye out for nearby vehicles, workers, and bystanders.
- Shut the engine off and let it cool before refueling. Have a fire extinguisher handy in case a fire starts.
- When you're done digging, park the digger on a level surface and engage the parking brake. Lower the bucket or attachment. Turn off the engine. Lock the cab and secure the keys.

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SAFETY REMINDER

Never use a digger as an aerial lift.

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Volume 46 Issue 35 August 28, 2023

Dealing with Anger on the Jobsite

Anger is a normal human emotion. Anger is a response to threat or danger. It could be a physical threat, or a threat to our pride, sense of control, understanding of fairness, etc. Getting angry isn't wrong, but uncontrolled anger can lead to lashing out and aggressive behavior that's unacceptable on the job. We all experience anger sometimes, and it's important that we manage this emotion.

Uncontrolled anger can lead to workplace violence, which is a serious safety issue. The Department of Labor estimates that approximately 2 million people in the U.S. are victims of non-fatal workplace violence every year. And this violence is a leading cause of fatalities at work. Violence can leave everyone feeling unsafe, stressed, and scared. People become less productive, get distracted, have low morale, and may be suspicious of one another.

The upside is that learning is just as normal as anger. We can learn to avoid problems with uncontrolled anger.

Learn to identify and manage your anger: Know your personal anger triggers. What conversations, behaviors, or situations tend to make you angry? Understanding these triggers will help you develop strategies to manage your anger. You might need help from a trusted friend or a professional counselor to understand your anger. Learn what you feel like when your anger is intensifying so you can take steps to control it.

Find practices that help you cool down and regulate your emotions in the moment: The options are endless,

but the right ones are unique to you. Here are a few samples: Take a pause when you feel angry. Step away from the situation for a few minutes to calm down. Take several slow, deep breaths. Count to 10 and think before you speak impulsively. Sometimes just taking a moment to drink a cool glass of water can help you calm down.

Learn how to communicate: You need to be able to express your frustrations or concerns without cursing, screaming, or blaming. Focus on solving the problem or fixing the issue instead of laying blame and finding fault in others. It'll take practice to learn how to talk about your feelings calmly.

Find ways to relieve stress outside of work: People are more likely to get angry when they're stressed. Exercise, hobbies, and mindfulness can help reduce the stress level in your body. Avoiding caffeine and alcohol, eating healthy food, and getting enough sleep also help reduce stress.

If someone on the jobsite gets really angry: Don't respond with anger or threats, since that can escalate the situation. If you feel threatened or like there's a potential for violence, walk away from the area calmly. Then, tell your supervisor what's happening or call 911. You're not snitching. You're keeping yourself and your co-workers safe.

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SAFETY REMINDER
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People will be less likely to get angry with you if you do the job the right way and the safe way.

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