Weekly Safety Meetings
Safety Training for the Construction Industry

Standard Subscription

COMPANY NAME: _____

Volume 46 Issue 1 January 2, 2023

Safety Review

Happy New Year! The beginning of a new year is a good time for reflection and planning. Take time to think about everything you accomplished and learned last year. Then, set some goals and make a meaningful resolution to make this year even safer.

Celebrate 2022 and pat yourself on the back if you:

- identified and changed a bad habit,
- made a point of attending safety training,
- encouraged others to work safely,
- improved your health, or
- shared your safety knowledge at home.

Learn from last year. Think about any near-miss incidents that occurred last year. Think about the actions that led to those incidents. Be honest with yourself. If your choices contributed to a near miss, resolve to make better choices in 2023. If you read about or witnessed an accident, learn from the mistakes those people made and don't repeat them. Use the accident as motivation to change the way you work so you prevent similar accidents from happening to you.

Do your part to make the jobsite safe for you and for your co-workers. We all have to work together and watch out for each other. If one of us ignores safe work practices and starts a fire, that puts all of us in danger. You can make the jobsite safer—and more pleasant—when you take time to get to know your co-workers. Crews that get along well and trust each other tend to be more effective and are likely to have fewer accidents.

Resolve to make 2023 a year of safe habits:

- Don't take shortcuts.
- Seek medical attention when you're injured, even if it's just a minor cut.
- Stay alert. Jobsite conditions change quickly.
- Stay focused. Avoid looking at your phone while you work. When you keep your attention on the task at hand and avoid distractions, you'll get the job done faster, better, and safer.
- Ask questions. Don't start a task if you aren't sure how to do it properly. Don't waste time feeling embarrassed. Just ask.
- Talk to your supervisor often. Warn them about outdated procedures. Let them know when you have ideas about how to make your work safer, easier, or more efficient.
- Read the Safety Data Sheet for every hazardous chemical you use, even if you've used it before.
- Improve your health. Participate in stretch-and-flex movements at work. Exercise daily. Eat healthy foods.

SAFETY REMINDER

Safe work practices prevent painful injuries that can keep you out of work for weeks or months.

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SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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Fire Watch

Hot work is any activity or process that involves open flames or hot molten metal, or that creates sparks, heat, or electric arcs. When you're soldering, cutting, welding, or applying roofing with a torch, that's considered hot work. Importantly, anytime you're engaged in hot work, you'll need a fire watch. A fire watch is someone whose job is to make sure a stray spark doesn't cause a fire or explosion that injures workers and damages property.

A fire watch is a person who has training in how to prevent or stop fires. When someone's working as a fire watch, their only job is to watch for signs of fire during and after hot work operations. They are 100% focused on responding immediately if a fire does occur. They'll be ready to extinguish small fires. They'll call the fire department when necessary. They'll tell others to evacuate.

Don't distract someone on fire watch. Don't ask them for help. They can't count bolts or get a tool for you. They are working. They need to stay alert and watch for fire.

You can't be your own fire watch. If you're the person doing the hot work, you'll need someone else to be your fire watch. Your attention will be focused on the work you're doing, and you won't necessarily notice a fire or react quickly enough if a fire starts.

You may need more than one person on fire watch. A single person might not be effective as a fire watch if the hot work covers a large area, if there are hidden areas or obstacles, or if the hot work could affect multiple floors.

A fire watch should remain in place after the hot work is finished. The fire watch needs to watch for smoldering fires for at least 30 minutes after the work stops. If the hot work is on a roof, the fire watch might have to stay in place for up to 2 hours. Ask your supervisor about specific site requirements.

A fire watch has the authority to stop work. If the fire watch thinks it's necessary, they can tell you to stop work and then take steps to make sure the hot work area is safe. If you're doing the hot work and you notice that conditions in the area have changed, be sure to tell your fire watch. For instance, tell the fire watch that you're bringing new or different materials into the hot work area or that you're switching from cutting to welding.

You'll need a fire watch when you perform hot work, and:

- When there are combustible materials within 35 feet of where the hot work is happening.
- When combustibles are more than 35 feet away, but could very easily be ignited by sparks.
- Anytime stray sparks or slag could possibly pass through a hole or opening and cause a fire in an adjacent area or on a lower floor.
- When conducted or radiated heat could cause combustible materials in an adjacent area to catch on fire.

SAFETY REMINDER

Never block emergency exits!

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Impalement Hazards

Impalement means to have a narrow, sharp, or pointed object stuck into or all the way through your body. Impalement causes very serious internal injuries and frequently ends in death! On a construction site, one of the most common impalement hazards is rebar. Let's go over some ways we can make sure no one falls into or onto rebar and gets impaled.

Before we go any further: If you witness an impalement, do not remove the object. Call 911 immediately.

Control rebar impalement hazards: The best way to control impalement hazards when you're working above exposed rebar is to use fall protection. After all, you can't be impaled if you can't fall onto the rebar. Make sure your total fall distance keeps you above the rebar.

Cover rebar to help prevent injuries:

- Install rebar caps on protruding rebar ends that stick out horizontally or vertically. Caps on exposed ends will reduce your chances of being scraped or otherwise injured if you brush up against them or fall against them.
- Remember that old-style mushroom caps won't prevent impalement. But they can protect you from small cuts and other minor injuries.
- Some protective caps are specially designed with extra protection against impalement. They're square and flat on the end and have a steel plate inside the plastic cover that keeps the end of the rebar from pushing through. If you fall against this type of cap, it will do a much better job of protecting you than a mushroom cap.
- You can add protection to rebar caps by installing 2x4s over the caps. This is especially useful for large beds of rebar.
- When capping the rebar isn't practical, consider using a job-built or pre-manufactured trough that covers multiple pieces of rebar at once.

Control other impalement and puncture hazards: It's not just rebar. Look around the jobsite and you'll see other impalement hazards that need to be controlled, too.

Reduce the chances of injury by:

- Noticing bolts, brackets, and angle iron that stick up or out. If they can't be removed, cover them with an appropriate cover or guard.
- Bending nails or pulling them out of scrap wood so no one can brush against them, lean on them, or step on them.
- Disposing of broken tools. A pick or shovel with a broken handle can be dangerous.
- Practicing good housekeeping. A garden rake that's lying on the ground with its forks up is a trap for anyone who steps on it.

SAFETY REMINDER

Even minor cuts can get infected easily. Get first aid.

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Volume 46 Issue 4 January 23, 2023

Safe Scaffolding

Scaffolds can provide a safe place to work—but only when you control scaffolding hazards. Today we're going to talk about: **1)** safe assembly and disassembly, **2)** avoiding contact with power lines, **3)** preventing struck-by injuries, and **4)** eliminating falls.

Assemble and disassemble safely. You should only assemble and disassemble scaffolds if you are trained, experienced, and under the supervision of a competent person. Inspect the area before you set up or dismantle scaffolding. Look for nearby power lines. Since you'll be handling long metal poles, you have to be far away from power lines so you don't get electrocuted. Make sure you have enough clearance so you can work safely. Plan for fall protection during assembly and disassembly. If you don't know the fall protection details, ask the competent person.

You'll also need to wear PPE for assembly and disassembly. Wear a hard hat to protect your head as scaffold components are being handed up or down. Wear cut-resistant gloves that fit snugly and improve your grip. Wear safety glasses and safety shoes. Remember that the hard hat in your truck or the safety glasses in your pocket won't protect you.

Avoid contact with power lines. The best solution is to have power lines near the scaffold de-energized. If it isn't possible to de-energize them, make sure everyone always keeps a safe distance from the power lines. The minimum safe distance is 10 feet, but that distance increases when the voltage increases. Check with the power company and determine the actual safe distance. Use barriers, like guardrails, to physically prevent people and their tools from getting too close to nearby power lines.

Prevent struck-by injuries. To start with, everyone has to wear a hard hat. When you work on a scaffold, you may be working above someone else on a lower platform or on the ground. You have a responsibility to keep those people safe. Tether tools to keep them from falling onto a co-worker or passer-by below. Install toeboards, screens, and debris nets to keep loose objects and materials from falling to the ground. When you can, avoid working around scaffolds so you're less likely to be hit if something falls off the scaffold.

Eliminate falls. Wear fall protection or work behind a guardrail system when you're working on a scaffold platform that's more than 10 feet above a lower level. If you're using a personal fall arrest system, check with the competent person before you tie off; they need to approve the anchorage point you use. Keep the platform clear of tools, materials, debris, trash, ice, snow, leaves, and anything else that could cause you or someone else to slip or trip. Never work on a scaffold if there is ice or snow on the platform.

SAFETY REMINDER

Pay attention to the weather forecast and plan your work with the weather in mind. If storms or high winds are on the way, don't work on a scaffold.

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Sharps

As a construction worker, you're no stranger to knives, cutters, and other sharp tools. But it's easy to avoid cuts and puncture wounds. Use sharps carefully, keep them in good condition, and if you do get injured, take care of cuts and lacerations promptly.

Choose the right tool and the right PPE for the job, even if that means you have to go back to your truck. A screwdriver isn't a chisel or a box opener. Don't improvise. Wear cut-resistant gloves when you use sharp tools. And wear safety glasses to protect your eyes if the blade shatters or breaks.

Always cut away from your body and eyes. Make sure you're not cutting in the direction of a pedestrian aisle or the body of a co-worker. Think about where the blade would go if it slipped, and make sure nobody's in the way.

Hand sharps to co-workers carefully. Retract the blade or close the scissors and pass them handle-first. Don't toss tools to anyone. Don't engage in horseplay around sharps.

Keep sharps sharp. When you use a sharp knife, you need less force to make the cut. But when the blade is dull, you push harder. The more force you use, the more likely you are to develop musculoskeletal problems. The more force you use, the more likely it is that the knife will slip, and that can mean a nasty cut for you.

Maintain sharp tools. When you're finished using a tool, clean it carefully, especially the blade. Put a little light oil on moving parts, like the pivot on snips.

Store sharp tools safely. Retract blades. Cover points. Use sheaths. Close scissors and snips. Store cutters and saw blades in their cases. Cases will protect your hands and the cutting edges on the blades. Don't leave sharp tools loose in your toolbox. And don't leave them lying on workbenches where they might slide off and puncture your foot.

Sometimes you have to clean up sharp debris like broken glass. Don't pick up broken pieces of glass with your bare hands. Wear a cut-resistant glove to pick up large pieces. Use a dustpan and broom for small, loose pieces. Then, wipe the area with a damp paper towel or rag to clean up the really small pieces. Wear that cut-resistant glove while you wipe up. Put the broken pieces and the rag or towel in a puncture-resistant container and mark it "broken glass." Tape up the container and put it in the garbage.

If you do get cut, make sure you take care of the wound. See a doctor right away if the cut is deep, is bleeding heavily, has dirt stuck in it, or is on your face. First aid for minor cuts is pretty simple. Stop the bleeding by elevating the wound and applying gentle pressure with clean gauze or paper towels. Gently clean the cut with soap and water. Cover it with an antibiotic cream and a clean bandage.

SAFETY REMINDER

You may have lightning-quick reflexes, but don't try to catch a falling tool. Move out of the way, let it fall, and then pick it up.

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