Weekly Safety Meetings
Safety Training for the Construction Industry

Standard Subscription

COMPANY NAME: _____

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Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer. We say that because it's a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas. You can't see it, smell it, or taste it. So, if it's in the air where you're working, you'll inhale it without knowing. If you breathe in too much for too long, you'll get sick and you could die.

Carbon monoxide is a byproduct of burning fuel including gasoline, wood, propane, and charcoal. The exhaust from fuel-powered equipment and machines usually contains carbon monoxide. Here are some examples:

- Portable equipment that burns fuel, like space heaters, generators, compressors, concrete saws, chain saws, and power washers.
- Gasoline-powered welding equipment.
- Heavy equipment like excavators, bulldozers, trucks, and concrete mixers.
- Your personal vehicle and the company truck.

Regularly inspect and maintain equipment and machines. When they're tuned properly and running well, they'll produce less carbon monoxide.

Buildings under construction usually lack good, effective ventilation once they start to get closed in. This is especially true in cold weather, when openings get tarped to help keep workers warm. Use fuel-powered tools and equipment outside the building and away from windows and doors whenever possible. When carbon monoxide is being produced inside the building, it's critical that you test the air regularly to make sure it's safe to breathe.

If you're in an enclosed space with little or no ventilation, and you're operating a fuel-powered tool, machine, or vehicle, you can be exposed to carbon monoxide. You should wear a portable carbon monoxide detector and pay attention to the alarm. You should also be familiar with the **symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:** headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, confusion, fatigue, loss of consciousness, and loss of muscle control.

Carbon monoxide poisoning affects the brain and heart the most. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, evacuate the area and get into fresh air right away. **Call 911!** If it's safe to do so, get everyone else out of the area, but call 911 first. The dispatcher may recommend giving artificial respiration to anyone who's unconscious. Do not enter an area that still contains carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide can also build up in your home if your heating system or gas-fired appliances aren't working properly. Get them checked out once a year. Have chimneys and flues cleaned regularly. Don't barbecue or use a camping stove indoors. Don't use a generator or run your vehicle in your garage. Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide alarm in your home. Test it tonight!

SAFETY REMINDER

Good ventilation can prevent the buildup of dangerous gases and vapors, and even some seasonal viruses.

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Underground and Overhead Utilities

Construction work almost always happens near utilities. Anytime you, a tool, or a piece of equipment contacts a utility line, bad things are likely to happen. The best case is a very costly repair. The worst case is a fatality.

There are many potential hazards you need to control when you work around utilities:

- If your work involves excavation, digging, or roofing, or if you use equipment that could hit a power line, you're at risk for burns, electrical shock, and electrocution.
- Hitting a gas line while excavating can result in explosions and fires.
- Breaking a sewer or water line can cause flooding. You could be over your head in muddy water or sewage. If you're in a trench, you could drown. Sewage can cause infections and diseases. Leaking water lines can cause mold and structural problems.
- Damage to communication cables may cause injuries, and may interrupt internet, telephone, and other critical communications.

Follow these safe work practices to prevent accidental contact with any utility above or below you:

- Whether it's a big dig or just a fence post, call 811 first to locate the utility lines in the area.
- Use proper hand-digging techniques when you get close to marked utilities.
- Look up to identify—and then avoid—overhead power lines. The minimum clearance is 10 feet, but higher voltages require larger clearances. Spotters can help operators maintain safe clearances. Remember that electrocution is a leading cause of death for construction workers.
- Ask the power company to de-energize overhead power lines that are close to your work.
- Wear the necessary PPE, like insulated gloves, when you work near utilities. Only use non-conductive ladders near power lines.

Know the Uniform Color Code for utility markings:

- WHITE is the proposed excavation.
- PINK is for temporary survey markings.
- RED is electrical power lines, cables, conduits, etc.
- YELLOW is for gas, oil, steam, petroleum, or gaseous materials.
- ORANGE is for communications, alarm, or signal lines, cables, or conduits.
- PURPLE is for reclaimed water, irrigation, and slurry lines.
- GREEN is for sewers and drain lines.
- BLUE is for potable water.

SAFETY REMINDER

Damaged utilities can disrupt local emergency services.

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Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

Construction is a physical job. All that physical work can lead to musculoskeletal disorders. You need to pay attention to how you work, even just unloading 2x4s. Musculoskeletal disorders are also called MSDs or repetitive strain injuries. They're injuries that affect the muscles, nerves, blood vessels, joints, ligaments, and tendons. They can be caused by everyday construction activities like lifting heavy items, reaching overhead, pushing or pulling heavy loads, working in awkward positions, or performing repetitive tasks. You work hard. Make sure you work hard to prevent MSDs.

Warm up. Your employer may require that you spend a few minutes each day bending and stretching muscles. But even if they don't, you should still take time to warm up. Stretch-and-flex exercises create flexibility in your muscles and joints. This flexibility can help reduce muscle tension and stress, increase your blood circulation, and help reduce your overall risk for strains, sprains, and injuries.

Stay loose. Holding any position for a long period of time can trigger the development of an MSD. So throughout the day, take frequent breaks. Shake out stiff muscles in your neck, shoulders, and back. Alternate between tasks that use different muscles and different parts of your body to avoid prolonged stress on a single joint or muscle group.

Know your limits. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your co-workers if a load or a task is too much for you to take on by yourself. Whenever you can, use a mechanical device like a forklift, hand truck, or dolly to handle heavy loads.

Lift carefully. Stand close to the load, and place your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees and keep your back straight. Grasp the load, hold it close, and lift with your legs. Don't twist your body or lift above your shoulders. Put the item down with the same care.

Stop the buzz. Choose tools, machinery, and equipment that have vibration-dampening features to reduce the strain on your hands and wrists.

Check your setup. Make sure your workbench is at a comfortable height so your wrists, back, and neck aren't at awkward angles. Keep tools within easy reach.

Get a good grip. Avoid tools with finger grooves, hard plastic handles, sharp edges, or handles that are too small or too big for your hand. Keep a firm hold on the tool with your whole hand, but don't use a death grip. Use vises, clamps, or jigs to hold and stabilize the workpiece so you don't have to hold and squeeze as much with your hands. If you can, use both hands instead of just one.

Talk about it. Report any injuries, aches, or pain. There might be solutions available, like making changes to your work area, wearing vibration-dampening gloves, changing your work practices, or rotating tasks.

SAFETY REMINDER

Stand up straight! Practicing good posture helps strengthen core muscles and can prevent back injuries.

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Ladder Safety

You know how important ladders are on the jobsite. You should also know how important it is to use them safely! Falls are a major cause of injuries and fatalities, and too many of those falls involve ladders. Falls from ladders happen when you use a ladder improperly, set it up incorrectly, reach too far when you're on the ladder, do something that causes you to lose your balance, or use a ladder that's damaged or defective.

The falls, injuries, and deaths associated with using ladders are all preventable—but only if you follow safe work practices.

Ladder safety begins with picking the right ladder for the job. Ladders can be made of wood, fiberglass, aluminum, steel, or carbon fiber. And there are many types of ladders: extension, platform, step, A-frame, podium, etc. Sometimes job-built ladders are used, but they're less common. You should understand the differences between ladder types. Select the one that matches your needs the best. Consider length, weight capacity, what it's made of, and where it'll be used, especially what the feet will sit on.

Some contractors have a "Ladders Last Policy." The policy requires employees to consider other, safer ways to access heights. Good alternatives include scissor lifts, boom lifts, and scaffolds, even though they may take longer to set up. But don't ever make do with a chair, box, bucket, stack of bricks, or a forklift to reach your work.

Always check the condition of the ladder before using it. Look for defects, damage, and missing parts. Check for broken rungs, split or cracked side rails, damaged hardware, broken feet, and missing rivets. If you notice any of these conditions, remove the ladder from service. Never use a damaged ladder. Tag damaged or broken ladders "DANGER. Do Not Use."

Get the setup right. Set up the ladder on a stable, level surface. Look up to check for overhead power lines. Be sure to keep your body and all ladders at least 10 feet away from power lines. Avoid using ladders in windy conditions.

Get ready to climb. Keep the area around the top and bottom of the ladder free from debris, scrap, tools, and other materials to eliminate tripping hazards that could cause falls. Before climbing a ladder, be sure that the rungs and your boots are clean—no mud, grease, snow, or oil. Don't carry tools or materials in your hands when climbing up or down a ladder. Use a tool belt or a pulley system to move materials up and down the ladder.

Stay safe on the ladder. Always keep 3 points of contact. Two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand. Face the ladder when climbing up and down. Keep your body between the side rails. Don't stand on the top few rungs, and if you're using a stepladder, never stand on the top step or the cap. Don't jump onto or off of a ladder. Never try to "walk" the ladder while you're on it. Instead, climb down, move it, and then climb back up.

SAFETY REMINDER

At home, if you're changing a light bulb, testing the smoke detector, taking down decorations, or cleaning the gutters, follow all the same safety practices you use on the job.

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