



# Lake County Contractors Association Safety News

June, 2003

**Safety Training** – For scheduled classes, check the enclosed 2003 Safety Training Reservation Form. For more information or to register on-line go to [www.lcca-il.org/events](http://www.lcca-il.org/events). The easiest way to get your employees trained is to let us schedule a class specifically for you. We will make sure the content is tailored to your employees and your industry.

Call Lisa at the LCCA Office for all your safety training needs.

**REMEMBER:** If you have ten or more (or will pay for 10 students) **we will bring the training to your office**, or a site of your choice, or hold your class at the LCCA Office.

First Aid, CPR, OSHA 10-Hour, Excavation Competent Person, Power Line, Confined Space, Respiratory Safety/Silica, Scaffold User or Competent Person, and much more are available for you. Since the LCCA Safety & Education Fund subsidizes the cost, the price is hard to beat.

Training dates are subject to our instructors' schedules, so if you want a particular date, call the LCCA Office as soon as possible.

## Ten Suggestions to Help Workers Stay Cool

- Encourage workers to drink plenty of **water** (without salt) --about one cup of cool water every 15-20 minutes, even if they are not thirsty.
- Help workers **adjust to the heat** by assigning a lighter workload and longer rest periods for the first five to seven days of intense heat. And this process needs to start all over again when a worker returns from vacation or absence due to illness or injury.
- Encourage workers to wear **lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing**. Workers should change their clothing if it gets completely saturated.
- Learn to **spot** the signs of **heat stroke**, which can be fatal. The symptoms are severe headache, mental confusion/loss of consciousness, flushed face, and hot, dry skin. If someone has stopped sweating, seek medical attention immediately. Other heat-induced illnesses include heat exhaustion, heat cramps, skin rashes, swelling and loss of mental and physical work capacity.
- **Train** first aid workers to recognize and treat the signs of heat stress. Be sure that all workers know who is trained to render first aid. Supervisors also should be able to detect early signs of heat-related illness and permit workers to interrupt their work if they become extremely uncomfortable.
- Consider a worker's **physical condition** when determining fitness to work in hot environments.

Obesity, lack of conditioning, pregnancy and inadequate rest can increase susceptibility to heat stress.

- **Alternate work and rest** periods, with longer rest periods in a cooler area. Shorter, but frequent, work-rest cycles are best. Schedule heavy work for cooler parts of the day and use appropriate protective clothing.
- Certain **medical conditions**, such as heart conditions, or treatments like low-sodium diets and some medications, increase the risk from heat exposure. Seek medical advice in those cases.
- **Monitor** temperatures, humidity and workers' responses to heat at least hourly.

*(Source: OSHA Regional News Release)*

**Tool Box Talks – Your Best Defense** – The OSHA inspector has just shown up on your job and you are now on the defensive. If he finds a violation that occurred because an employee did not do their job, you will pay the price unless you can prove:

1. You have a rule
2. The rule was distributed to the employee
3. The employee was trained, and
4. You enforced the rule.

Tool Box Talks are the best way to document that an employee has been trained in a specific rule. Use it!

**Many Construction Accidents Have Common Threads** - Men and women working in the construction industry are subject to a myriad of on-the-job safety and health hazards, but investigators with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration say there are certain common elements that run through most occupational accidents.

Agency investigators, speaking during the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Construction Safety Conference and Exposition, gave examples of work site accidents involving plumbers, painters, cutting torch operators, sewer workers, and residential construction laborers. Despite significant differences in the duties assigned to each of these professionals, the investigators said there were common mistakes and common statute violations running through each accident. By avoiding these common problems, the agency

officials said the safety and well being of more workers would be preserved each year.

George Yoksas, an investigator in OSHA's Milwaukee area office, said language issues are too often at the heart of on-the-job accidents. He noted that the number of Spanish-speaking workers in the construction field has grown quickly in recent years. At the same time, employers are not doing enough to inform these workers about their rights under the law and the hazards they will face on the job. He said employers have a duty to train these workers and provide them with the language-appropriate information they need to do their jobs safely.

Yoksas said no region of the country is immune from the types of communication problems that result in job related accidents. While the need for safety communication in Spanish is important, he said employers must be cognizant of the wide range of communication requirements of ethnic groups under their supervision.

"When you look at the various parts of the county, it is clear this is something OSHA needs to address, and the contractors and the employers need to address," he said. "Communications is the key to a lot of these problems."

Yoksas's comments came during a session in which OSHA investigators from several offices across the country presented case studies focusing on a major accident in their area.

Other themes that emerged during the session included:

- confusion over safety responsibilities between different levels of contractors and subcontractors working on a job;
- improper use of equipment or improper modifications of equipment;
- ignorance of legal requirements;
- poor hazard assessment;
- failures in safety monitoring during the course of a project; and
- ignoring safety in hopes of saving a few dollars.

Mimi Thuang, an industrial hygienist in OSHA's Dallas office, described an accident in which a young Hispanic laborer fell to his death on a residential construction job site. After an investigation, Thuang said OSHA found numerous violations by the general contractor, the primary framing subcontractor, and the secondary framing subcontractor.

Among other things, Thuang said the various employers failed to tailor their safety policies and trainings for non-English speakers. The employers also failed to provide workers with a guardrail system along stairways, balconies, and floor openings. As a result, all three contractors were cited for violations under the OSHA's multi-employer policy and under its fall protection regulations. The secondary subcontractor, which actually employed the accident victim, was also cited for a range of violations pertaining to training and safety monitoring.

## **OSHA Multi-Employer Worksite Policy -**

According to OSHA policy, OSHA inspectors who identify a hazard on a multi-employer worksite will follow a two-step

process to determine whether more than one employer will be cited. The first step is to determine whether the employer is a creating, exposing, correcting, and/or controlling employer. Once the employer category is determined, step two is to determine whether appropriate action was taken.

All citations are fact and situation specific. The examples provided in the citation policy, however, indicate that employers who take the following steps are less likely to receive citations.

- First, implement a strong safety program for your workers, promptly correct all identified hazards over which you have control, protect your employees and all others on the jobsite from the hazard, and keep copious notes of all proactive and preventive safety measures taken throughout the duration of the job.
- Second, reasonably watch out for and immediately alert other employers of safety hazards they create, and take all reasonable steps to protect your employees from the hazard.
- Finally, contractually limit your safety responsibilities to the activities you reasonably control and then act accordingly. Ask your subcontractors to make affirmative statements in the subcontract about their safety programs and records.

The citation policy defines the four categories and offers examples of situations where citations should or should not be issued to more than one employer on a multi-employer worksite.

## **Back Injuries Major Source of Workers Comp Claims –**

- ⇒ More than 1 million workers suffered back injuries each year.
- ⇒ Back injuries account for 1 in 5 workplace injuries or illnesses.
- ⇒ One-fourth of all compensation indemnity claims involve back injuries.
- ⇒ In 1998 there were 279,507 back injuries caused by overexertion resulting in lost workdays.

With this in mind, what do you think should be a safety emphasis in your company? LCCA has four safety videos on Back Safety. Have your employees seen a good video recently? (Reprinted from *Safety Gram*, A Safety Environmental Engineering, Inc. Publication)

**Speaking of Backs** – Millions of workers use back belts to prevent injuries, but they probably shouldn't. A recent study found that workers who wore back belts and those who never wore them were just as likely to report back pain or file workers' compensation claims for back injuries.