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Solvent Linked to Suicide

Could exposure to a workplace solvent cause someone to commit suicide? A coroner in Wellington, New Zealand, says it could.

He conducted an inquest into the death of a worker in the printing industry who stepped in front of a commuter train and was killed instantly.

The coroner ruled the victim was suffering from solvent-induced neurotoxicity nervous system effects caused by solvent poisoning. Testimony at the coroner's inquest indicated the victim had been anxious, depressed and suffering from multiple health problems.

The coroner called for more research into the effects of industrial chemicals on workers.

A study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the United States found that organic solvents cause acute and chronic effects on the human central nervous system. Changes can include personality and mood shifts such as emotional instability, depression, and diminished impulse control, motivation, concentration, memory and learning capacity.

Final Word

NIOSH says the nervous system effects of exposure to organic solvents can cause deaths and increase risk of accidental injury at work and away from the job. The institute has identified areas of research needed on solvents, including tests to determine neurotoxicity, improved monitoring of exposures, better ways to prevent worker exposure and determining to what extent solvent exposure increases injury risk at work and away from work.

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Noise Control & Hearing Protection

Are You Taking the 12 Measures OHS Laws Require?

Self-assessing your noise control measures is urgent in Ontario and just a huge priority everywhere else.

1. Do You Properly Measure Sound Levels? [ ] YES NO [ ]

As with other hazards, assessment is the first step in controlling noise hazards. Basically, your employer is required to find out how loud it is by measuring sound levels in areas where noise could be at hazardous levels. Sound levels can be scientifically measured, and you may be asked to assist in various aspects of a noise survey.

2. Do You Properly Calculate Worker Exposure Levels? [ ] YES NO [ ]

Safety regulations dictate that an employer analyze the data to assess if workers are exposed to hazardous levels of noise. You must measure noise levels in A-weighted decibel units. The so-called dBA scale measures sound pressure modified to account for the ear's different levels of sensitivities to sounds of different frequencies.

To perform the required assessment, you must consider not just sound intensity but how long workers are exposed to it. Exposure to sound above 85 dBA must be reduced in duration; the higher the sound level, the shorter the duration.

Table 1: Noise OELs by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Continuous Noise (maximum permitted exposure for 8 hours dBA)	Impulse/Impact Noise (maximum peak pressure level dB(peak))
Federal	87	--
Alberta	85	--
BC	85	140
Manitoba	85	--
New Brunswick	85	140
Newfoundland	85	--
Nova Scotia	85	--
Ontario	85	--
Prince Edward Island	85	--
Québec	90	140
Saskatchewan	85	--
Northwest Territories	85	140
Nunavut	85	140
Yukon	85	140

3. Do You Properly Determine Workers' Need for Hearing Protection? [ ] YES NO [ ]

In most jurisdictions, hearing protection measures are required when workers are at risk of exposure above the 85 dBAs OEL; but in Sask. and the territories, the need for hearing protection kicks in at above 80 dBA.

4. Do You Use Hierarchy of Controls' to Select Hearing Protection Measures? [ ] YES NO [ ]

Having determined that noise hazards exist (if you come to the opposite conclusion, you can stop reading), it becomes a matter of figuring out how to control them. The OHS laws give you discretion to select your own controls based on what's "practicable" in the circumstances; but they also mandate the approach you must follow in exercising your discretion: the so called "hierarchy of controls." Items 5 thru 8 below, explain how to implement the hierarchy for noise hazards.

5. Do You Eliminate Noise Hazards If Practicable? [ ] YES NO [ ]

The top of the hierarchy, and measure to always consider first, is total elimination of the hazard. In the context of noise hazards, that generally involves getting rid of dangerously noisy machinery and equipment and substituting safer alternatives.

6. Do You Implement Appropriate Engineering Controls? [ ] YES NO [ ]

If, as will likely be the case, elimination isn't practicable, the next layer of preference are engineering controls to eliminate or minimize noise hazards. Some engineering controls eliminate noise hazards at the source, such as:

- Redesigning, modifying or retrofitting equipment, e.g., via installation of mufflers or noise damping materials; and/or
- Relocating noisy machinery and equipment.

Other engineering controls eliminate noise hazards along their path to the worker. Examples:

- Installing sound-absorbing materials in or enclosing noisy work areas; and/or

TOOL

Use the Checklist on page 9 to ensure your hearing conservation plan has the elements required to comply with the law and protect your workers.

- Screening or shielding noisy equipment.

7. Do You Implement Appropriate Administrative & Work Controls? [ ] YES NO [ ]

The next rung down in the hierarchy are measures that minimize hazards by controlling how and when the work is performed. For example, work/administrative controls for noise hazards would include modifying work schedules to limit how long workers are exposed and rotating workers in and out of noise hazard areas.

8. Do You Ensure Proper PPE Use when Noise Hazards Can't Be Engineered Away? [ ] YES NO [ ]

The bottom layer of the hierarchy is controlling hazards via PPE, i.e., making workers exposed to noise hazards use personal hearing protection. While perfectly okay as a complementary measure, personal hearing protection is generally not allowed as the primary method of protection except in narrow circumstances where engineering controls are unavailable, ineffective or otherwise impracticable. Employers must also ensure that selection and use of hearing protection meets the latest CSA standards for hearing protection, i.e., CSA Z94.2-02-*Hearing Protection Devices—Performance, Selection, Care, and Use*.

9. Do You Post Proper Warning Signs? [ ] YES NO [ ]

Employers must post clearly worded noise hazard warning signs, although there are slight differences as to when signs are required (with regard to whether noise must be above or near the OEL) and what they must say. *Go online to SafeSupervisor.com for the full table of restrictions.*

10. Do You Provide Workers Proper Education & Training? [ ] YES NO [ ]

As with any other hazard, workers required to use hearing protection or otherwise exposed to hazardous noise levels must receive education and training from a competent trainer covering, at a minimum:

- The hazards of exposure to excessive noise;
- How hearing protection protects against such hazardous exposure;
- The capabilities and limitations of the particular types of hearing protection devices used;
- The importance of ensuring a tight and comfortable fit;
- How to get a tight seal between earplugs and the ear canal;
- How to get a tight seal between earmuffs and the side of head;
- How to inspect the equipment;
- How to clean, disinfect and maintain the equipment;
- Why it's important not to modify the equipment, e.g., by drilling holes in earcups; and
- Key details about the audiometric testing being done, how it works and what they must do to best benefit from testing.

11. Do You Provide Workers Required Audiometric Testing? [ ] YES NO [ ]

Occupational hearing loss tends to be gradual and cumulative. By the time workers notice a problem, it's often too late to reverse the damage. Audiometric testing by medical professionals is capable of detecting hearing damage *before* symptoms are perceived. The way it works: Workers exposed to potentially hazardous noise levels receive initial testing before exposure. Testers can then track the impact of exposure on hearing by comparing the results of subsequent tests to the individual's "baseline" results.

Unlike the other 11 noise protection measures on this list, audiometric testing is *not* required in all parts of Canada—only in 9 jurisdictions (Alberta, BC, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and the 3 territories). Of course, there's more to safety than OHS laws. Thus, many employers in jurisdictions where audiometric testing isn't required choose to provide it anyway, such as under collective agreements and/or best-in-class OHS programs geared toward complying with voluntary safety standards that exceed regulatory requirements.

12. Do You Monitor the Effectiveness of Your Noise Control Measures? [ ] YES NO [ ]

The final phase is to monitor the validity of your noise assessment and effectiveness of your noise control program and/or non-program measures at least once a year and immediately in response to:

- Worker complaints or symptoms indicating ringing in the ears or hearing loss;
- Changes to equipment, machinery, tools, or work conditions that increase or have the potential to increase either: (i) how much noise the worker is exposed to; and/or (ii) the exposure's duration;
- Before the construction of significant additions or alterations to a work site that have the potential to create noise hazards; and
- Any other indications suggesting that your assessment and safety measures might be ineffective or unresponsive to current work site conditions and noise hazards.

Get The Complete Noise Protection Game Plan Including:

Table of Restrictions on Use of Hearing PPE by Jurisdiction and more are downloadable at www.SafeSupervisor.com

Protect Your Hearing and Avoid Hearing Loss

What's at Stake?

As the saying goes, "*better the devil you know than the devil you don't*." Our sly, unknown devil here is noise because it causes a host of health problems, with painless symptoms that progress unnoticed until it is too late.

Even more disturbing is that the ears become accustomed to noise and the brain accepts it as normal, after a short while. Do not be fooled though, noise-induced hearing loss cannot be reversed!

What's the Danger?

Damage from long-term exposure to excessive noise includes

- deafness,
- tinnitus (ringing in the ears),
- anxiety,
- depression,
- stress and;
- headaches.

Loss of hearing from high noise makes it hard to hear warnings and directions and this can lead to accidents. Though most employers make great effort to protect workers from noise hazards, sometimes, the problem is not what is done but how it is done.

Some workplaces might not understand what level of noise is harmful and this creates room for error while implementing controls. But safety regulations require employers to protect workers from excessive noise; this means, having a program that regulates noise exposure through noise level assessments, hearing protection, employee training and hearing tests. Without this program and its annual reviews, control measures are useless and may even become hazardous.

How to Protect Yourself

The best way to prevent hearing damage is by avoiding exposure to excessive noise. Noisy jobs should be identified, and control measures put in place.

Control measures might include:

- Installing sound-dampening or sound-proofing materials.
- Enclosing a noisy process or equipment.
- Regular maintenance.
- Job rotation –to lessen exposure time.
- Putting up signage to warn workers hearing protection is required.

Workers can prevent hearing loss by:

- Staying informed and watching for warning signs, such as ringing or humming in your ears and temporary loss of hearing when you leave work.
- Wearing and maintaining all hearing protection provided by your employer.
- Using the right hearing protection for the job, task, or area.
- Participating in your employer's audiometric program and understanding the results of your hearing tests.
- Asking questions about noise levels, hearing protection, and other noise and hearing related issues, as soon as you have a concern.

Final Word

Hearing loss is permanent. Once your hearing is gone the damage can't be reversed. Prevention is your only option; protect your hearing while you still have it.

QUIZ ANSWERS: 1.True 2. False 3. True 4. False

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Damage caused by excess noise is gradual and painless.
   ☐ True ☐ False
2. Loss of hearing cannot lead to accidents.
   ☐ True ☐ False
3. Deafness can result from hearing damage.
   ☐ True ☐ False
4. One type of hearing protection is right for all types of jobs.
   ☐ True ☐ False

What Would You Do?

If you had to work in hot weather and the required PPE for that particular job includes, a helmet that feels heavy, eye goggles that make your vision fuzzy and ear muffs that feel sweaty and uncomfortable, what would you do?

Meeting materials to go:
Safety meeting materials such as presentation tips, PowerPoint presentations, quiz answers and more are downloadable at www.SafeSupervisor.com

What is an Assured Grounding Program?

What's at Stake?

An 18-year-old worker at a construction site was electrocuted when he touched a light fixture while descending from a scaffold for his afternoon break. The source of the electricity was apparently a short in a receptacle, but examination revealed that the electrical equipment used by the contractor was in such poor condition that it was impossible to make a certain determination of the source of the short. Extension cords had poor splices, no grounds, and reversed polarity. One hand drill was not grounded, and the other had no safety plate. Out of several possible scenarios, the most likely was contact between the exposed wires of an extension cord and a screw that protruded from the receptacle, which had its face plate removed. The light fixture, which served as a ground, was known to be faulty for at least 5 months before the incident.

What's the Danger?

Continued use of damaged electrical equipment (power tools, extension cords, etc) poses an extremely hazardous risk for workers:

- Power tools that have three prongs (hot, neutral and ground) may have the grounding pin missing which may cause the tool to develop a short which may cause the user to become the ground in the system and electricity will travel through him or her.
- Sometimes during use, the third prong or grounding pin, may become loose or fall out. No one should be allowed to bypass the grounding pin by bending it out of the way or removing it completely.
- Flat-wire cords are prohibited from use on construction sites due to the lack of protection compared to double-insulated cords.
- Double-insulated tools should be used which generally means the tool is encased in plastic, which prevents the user from electrocution if the tool develops a short circuit.

How to Protect Yourself

The above story is just one of many incidents workers have faced when working with electricity, many of which can be prevented. One such prevention is the use of an **Assured Grounding Program**. The Assured Grounding Program consists of a written program, daily visual inspections and a method to detect a faulty grounding wire in an extension cord or hand tool. The objective is to prevent electrocution by ensuring the grounding wire is electrically continuous from the power tool to the power source. An Assured Grounding Program contains four parts:

1. **Worker training:** All workers using extension cords and power tools under an Assured Grounding Program must be trained.
2. **Daily visual inspection:** Extension cords and power tools must be checked daily for damage by the persons using them. Any damage found must be repaired before the cord or tool is used.
3. **Continuity and polarity testing:** A qualified worker must test every extension cord and power tool for circuit continuity, terminal connection test, and correct polarity. Tests are mandatory before tools are used for the first time, following repairs, and at designated times of the year. A qualified worker is a person who has been authorized by a supervisor and who has received appropriate training.
4. **Color-coding extension cords and power tools:** Extension cords and power tools that have been tested must be tagged with a colored band about 4 inches (10 centimeters) from the male plug. Colored electrical tape is suitable for this purpose. A different color is required at the beginning of each quarter in Canada and at the beginning of each quarter and month in the US. These colors are standard for all worksites.

Final Word

Use of assured grounding programs will keep workers safe from electricity hazards by using systematic testing of tools to ensure equipment poses no risks.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Testing can be done at any time during the quarter or month, as long as it gets done.
   ☐ True ☐ False
2. If the grounding pin is missing, the user can become the ground for an electrical system.
   ☐ True ☐ False
3. A qualified person is anyone the supervisor approves, regardless of training attained.
   ☐ True ☐ False

What Would You Do?

At the beginning of a work day, you are checking your equipment. An electrical cord you need seems to be cracked, however, it's tagged with an appropriate colored tag for use. What would you do?

QUIZ ANSWERS 1. False 2. True 3. True

Why Accidents Happen and How to Avoid Them

What's at Stake?

Accidents may seem like a word used only in safety briefings until one occurs. When it does happen, it comes with reeling effects: injuries, death, court prosecutions, loss of property, damage to company reputation and the environment. The slowdown in business activities further drives down income. However, the immediate and remote causes of workplace accidents can almost always be traced to unsafe acts and unsafe conditions.

What's the Danger?

Unsafe acts are human-related actions that threaten the health and safety of workers. Examples of unsafe acts:

- Taking shortcuts involve by-passing safety instructions and procedures meant to protect workers from harm. These include carrying out a job without performing a job safety analysis (JSA) or engaging in high-risk work without a work permit.
- Inadequate training. Imagine driving a car on a freeway, after a few informal lessons, without learning the traffic laws and undergoing a driving test. Wouldn't your inability to understand traffic laws and your lack of driver training increase the chances of an accident occurring? Lack of training makes it much more likely you will be in an accident at work too!
- Using damaged or faulty work tools and equipment is an unsafe act and a big safety hazard. ●
- Engaging in horseplay during work activities reduces your concentration making it harder to observe safety rules and makes it difficult to get a full description of an accident and may affect your right to compensation or health insurance.
- Abusing drugs or working under the influence of drugs and alcohol limits mental focus, slows your reaction time, affects balance and coordination.

Unsafe conditions are hazardous, managerial, physical and environmental conditions that exist in the workplace and a crucial role in triggering accidents.

- Environmental hazards: example, extreme weather conditions, fires, oil spill, gas leakage.
- Equipment failure.
- Inadequate communication: example, no safety meetings, toolbox talks, safety signage, safety policies, or safe work procedures.
- Poor safety culture: no reporting systems, recordkeeping. ●
- Poor housekeeping.

How to Protect Yourself

- Obey all safety rules (including the use of PPE) ; they are for your protection.
- Only carry out tasks you are trained for; especially tasks requiring special skills.
- Never mix work with play, it is harmful in more ways than one.
- Always inspect your work tools/ equipment in order to detect damages and report them. ●
- Do not abuse drugs and never work under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Take a permitted break from work whenever you are mentally stressed out.
- Maintain good housekeeping before, during and after work.
- Ensure proper understanding by asking questions and repeating during communication.
- Always inspect the work environment for strange changes before any activity.

Final Word

Accidents are caused by our actions and inactions; the most important step towards avoiding them is identifying and addressing their causes. Report unsafe acts and conditions as soon as you see them and don't engage in unsafe acts.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Taking shortcuts include working without permits where required.
   ☐ True ☐ False
2. Causes of accidents can almost always be traced to unsafe acts and unsafe conditions.
   ☐ True ☐ False
3. Safety rules are meant to slow our work down.
   ☐ True ☐ False
4. Inspecting work equipment before working is a sign of laziness.
   ☐ True ☐ False

What Would You Do?

A minor oil spill was identified during a workplace inspection and your direct boss is pressuring you to get it cleaned up today, but the job requires a work permit which will only be available tomorrow. What would you do to protect yourself and your impatient boss?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Meeting materials to go:
Safety meeting materials such as presentation tips, PowerPoint presentations, quiz answers and more are downloadable at www.SafeSupervisor.com

QUIZ ANSWERS: 1.True 2. True 3. False 4. False

Utility Workers — Pre-Job Briefings

What's at Stake?

Failure to identify job hazards is a major concern for utility workers. If an employee doesn't know the dangers involved in their job, they won't be able to protect against them.

Employee failure to identify and grasp jobsite hazards has led to numerous electrical utility accidents. Before ever stepping foot on a work site, employees need to know what hazards exist and what steps to take to reduce the risk of accident and injury.

Job briefings help you plan your work and ensure employee safety, protect equipment, and protect the public from whatever could go wrong. They are delivered by a senior person on the site such as a supervisor, project manager or site foreman.

What's the Danger?

Even the most experienced utility workers need regular reminders of what hazards are around them. The best way to keep them aware of hazards is to start EVERY day with a pre-job briefing. Many regulatory agencies require at least one briefing before each work day or shift. Additional briefings are needed if any "significant changes" that might affect employees' safety occur.

An employee who is working alone is not normally required to conduct a job briefing. Even so, an employer must make sure tasks are planned out, just "as if" a briefing had been required. A supervisor should brief the employee on hazards, work procedures, and safety measures.

How to Protect Yourself

Start by knowing what to expect from a pre-job briefing:

1. Discussion of hazards associated with the job
   - Be reminded where hazard management plans are kept.
   - Supervisor completes checklist.
   - Be told the Minimum Approach Distances (MAD) for unprotected parts of the body.
   - Discuss "Extended Reach".
   - The presence of any hazardous substances highlighted.
   - Other dangers, such as: high air pressure; high water pressure; pressurized chemical injection systems; steam pressure; heat.
2. Review of hazard management plans
   - What is to be done and in what sequence.
   - How it is to be done and by whom.
   - Possible hazards and how they are to be addressed.
   - The status of energy sources.
   - PPE requirements.
   - All changes in procedure and scope of the work..
3. How to deal with significant changes
   - Different kinds of tasks on the same shift.
   - New personnel or spectators.
   - Changing weather.
   - Significant delays (e.g., interrupting work for a trouble call, then resuming).
   - Changing scope of work.
   - Unexpected complications, hazards, malfunctions, or distractions.
4. To be brief or not to be
   - Short briefings are needed for: daily updates; routine work; employees' training and experience are adequate to recognize and avoid hazards.
   - Extensive briefings are needed for: complicated or hazardous work; employees who might not have the experience to recognize and avoid hazards.
5. Remember these meetings are for you and your safety
   - Get involved in the briefing, don't just listen.
   - Make suggestions about how to stay safe.
   - Raise health & safety concerns.

Final Word

Pre-job briefings are an essential way to keep utility workers safe. It is vital that you pay close attention, no matter how experienced you are or how often you have attended such meetings.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Pre-job briefings are delivered by anyone, interested in site safety.
   ☐ True ☐ False
2. What is a MAD when working near overhead power lines?
3. Everyone should attend pre-job briefings, no matter how experienced they are.
   ☐ True ☐ False

What Would You Do?

You attended the pre-job briefing yesterday on a power line installation that you have just started work on. You missed the pre-job briefing for today's work, which is the same work you were doing yesterday. What would you do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

QUIZ ANSWERS: 1. False 2. Minimum Approach Distance 3. True

MODEL CHECKLIST

Hearing Conservation Plan Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure that your hearing conservation plan has the elements required to comply with the law and effectively protect your workers. Use the checklist when creating your plan and during annual reviews of it. Adapt it to reflect the specific requirements in your jurisdiction. To download the complete version, visit SafeSupervisor.com.

Location: _____ **Date:** _____ **Person(s) Performing Inspection:** _____

NOISE MEASUREMENT

- ☐ Determined representative noise exposure levels for all noise-exposed jobs in accordance with standards
- ☐ A report of the noise survey findings is available

NOISE CONTROLS

- ☐ Identified major noise sources and options for engineered noise controls
- ☐ Where practicable, implemented engineered noise controls
- ☐ Where engineering controls were impracticable, implemented administrative controls, such as rotating schedules
- ☐ Developed a noise control maintenance plan
- ☐ Have noise specifications for use when purchasing new equipment
- ☐ Include noise control in new facility planning

HEARING PROTECTION/PPE

- ☐ Select hearing protection in accordance with criteria specified in OHS regulations
- ☐ Individually fit each worker with hearing protectors and train them in its use and care
- ☐ Replace hearing protection on a regular basis
- ☐ Recheck worker's hearing protection during annual hearing test for condition/fit/correct placement
- ☐ Strictly & consistently enforce hearing protection use

SIGNAGE

- ☐ Posted warnings signs where noise hazard exists
- ☐ Signs warn all workers to wear hearing protection in these areas

HEARING TESTS

- ☐ Hearing tests are conducted in accordance with the requirements specified in the OHS regulations
- ☐ Workers are advised to bring their hearing protection with them to the hearing test
- ☐ Workers are privately & individually counselled on hearing test results & use and care of hearing protection
- ☐ Maintain records of hearing tests in a confidential manner
- ☐ Test all noise-exposed workers annually
- ☐ Submit test results to [insert all required parties]

EDUCATION & TRAINING : Noise-exposed workers have received education and training on:

- ☐ Regulatory requirements and responsibilities
- ☐ Occupational exposure limits for noise
- ☐ The effects of noise on hearing
- ☐ Company policies and procedures on eliminating noise as a hazard
- ☐ Identification of hazardous noise sources in the workplace
- ☐ Results of noise level measurements
- ☐ Proper use and maintenance of hearing protection
- ☐ Purpose and importance of hearing testing
- ☐ Worker responsibilities for preventing hearing loss
- ☐ Supervisors responsible for noise-exposed workers have been trained on hearing loss to understand the plan goals and policies, and use and fitting of hearing protection

ANNUAL PLAN REVIEW

- ☐ Plan addresses/fulfills the requirements in the OHS regulations
- ☐ Annually review the plan's effectiveness
- ☐ Address identified deficiencies in an action plan
- ☐ Implement and document action plan
- ☐ Share results of the review with the JHSC

Go to SafeSupervisor.com for a downloadable PDF and editable WORD template with expanded criteria.

Helping Employees Conquer Workplace Stress

Workplace stress is normal – but when the stress is excessive it can wreak havoc on the productivity, performance, and physical and emotional health of your employees.

Workplace stress is normal – but when the stress is excessive it can wreak havoc on the productivity, performance, and physical and emotional health of your employees. It can also interfere with job safety. You can help your employees deal with stress in several ways.

First, you must be aware of common causes of workplace stress.

- Fear of being laid off
- More overtime due to staff cutbacks
- Pressure to perform to meet rising expectations but with no increase in job satisfaction
- Pressure to work at optimum levels—all the time!
- Lack of control over how you do your work

Next, know and educate employees on the signs of excessive workplace stress.

- Feeling anxious, irritable, or depressed
- Apathy, loss of interest in work
- Problems sleeping
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Stomach problems
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of sex drive
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

Then, encourage employees to try these stress busting tips.

1. Exercise

a. Working out regularly is one of the best ways to relax your body and mind.

b. Plus, exercise will improve your mood. But you have to do it often for it to pay off.

   i. Good: At the very least, 3 to 5 times for 30 minutes

   ii. Better: 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise like brisk walks

   iii. Best: Add 75 minutes of a vigorous exercise like swimming laps, jogging, or other sports that gets your heart rate up

You can help your employees deal with stress.

2. Eat well

a. Eating a regular, well-balanced diet helps you feel better in general. It may also help control your moods.

b. Aim for meals full of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and lean protein for energy. And don't skip any. It's not good for you and can put you in a bad mood, which can actually increase your stress.

3. Sleep well

a. Try to improve the quality of your sleep by going to bed and getting up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Aim for 8 hours a night—the amount of sleep most adults need to operate at their best.

b. Turn off screens one hour before bedtime. The light emitted from TV, tablets, smartphones, and computers suppresses your body's production of melatonin and can severely disrupt your sleep.

c. Avoid stimulating activity and stressful situations before bedtime such as catching up on work. Instead, focus on quiet, soothing activities, such as reading or listening to soft music, while keeping lights low.

4. Chill out

a. When you're driving on the highway, switch to the slow lane so you can avoid road rage.

b. Break down big jobs into smaller ones. For example, don't try to answer all 100 emails if you don't have to — just answer a few of them.

c. Try yoga, meditation, listening to music you like and other relaxing activities and hobbies.

5. Talk it out

a. Find a friend, co-worker, or family member you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with.

b. Talking about things that are troubling you can help lower your stress.

Resolve to Reduce Incidents and Injuries

Hazard Identification and Assessment

One of the "root causes" of workplace injuries, illnesses, and incidents is the failure to identify or recognize hazards that are present, or that could have been anticipated. A critical element of any effective safety and health program is a proactive, ongoing process to identify and assess such hazards.

Start the new year off right (and safe) by brushing up on your hazard ID and assessment skills!

Here are six action items to help you out:

Action item 1:

Collect existing information about workplace hazards

- Equipment and machinery operating manuals.
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS).
- Inspection reports.
- Injury and illness records.
- Workers' compensation records and reports.
- Patterns of frequently-occurring injuries and illnesses.
- Exposure monitoring results, industrial hygiene assessments, and medical records (appropriately redacted to ensure patient/worker privacy).
- Existing safety and health programs (lockout/tagout, confined spaces, PPE, etc.).
- Input from workers, including surveys or minutes from safety and health committee meetings.
- Results of job hazard analyses, also known as job safety analyses.

Action item 2:

Inspect the workplace for safety hazards

Hazards can be introduced over time as workstations and processes change, equipment or tools become worn, maintenance is neglected, or housekeeping practices decline. Setting aside time to regularly inspect the workplace for hazards can help identify shortcomings so that they can be addressed before an incident occurs.

- Conduct regular inspections of all operations, equipment, work areas and facilities. Have workers participate on the inspection team and talk to them about hazards they see or report.
- Document inspections so you can later verify that hazardous conditions are corrected.
- Include all areas and activities in these inspections, such as storage and warehousing, facility and equipment maintenance, purchasing and office functions, and the activities of on-site contractors, subcontractors, and temporary employees.
- Regularly inspect both plant vehicles (e.g., forklifts, powered industrial trucks) and transportation vehicles (e.g., cars, trucks).
- Use checklists that highlight things to look for.
- Before changing operations, workstations, or workflow; making major organizational changes; or introducing new equipment, materials, or processes, seek the input of workers and evaluate the planned changes for potential hazards and related risks.

Action item 3:

Identify health hazards

Identifying workers' exposure to health hazards is typically more complex than identifying physical safety hazards. Gases and vapors may be invisible, often have no odor, and may not have an immediately noticeable harmful health effect.

Health hazards include chemical hazards (solvents, adhesives, paints, toxic dusts, etc.), physical hazards (noise, radiation, heat, etc.), biological hazards (infectious diseases), and ergonomic risk factors (heavy lifting, repetitive motions, vibration).

- *Identify chemical hazards* –review SDS and product labels to identify chemicals in your workplace that have low exposure limits, are highly volatile, or are used in large quantities or in unventilated spaces. Identify activities that may result in skin exposure to chemicals.
- *Identify physical hazards* –identify any exposures to excessive noise (areas where you must raise your voice to be heard by others), elevated heat (indoor and outdoor), or sources of radiation (radioactive materials, X-rays, or radio frequency radiation).
- *Identify biological hazards* –determine whether workers may be exposed to sources of infectious diseases, molds, toxic or poisonous plants, or animal materials (fur or scat) capable of causing allergic reactions or occupational asthma.
- *Identify ergonomic risk factors* –examine work activities that require heavy lifting, work above shoulder height, repetitive motions, or tasks with significant vibration.
- *Conduct quantitative exposure assessments* –when possible, using air sampling or direct reading instruments.
- *Review medical records* –to identify cases of musculoskeletal injuries, skin irritation or dermatitis, hearing loss, or lung disease that may be related to workplace exposures.

Action item 4:

Conduct incident investigations

Workplace incidents –including injuries, illnesses, close calls/near misses, and reports of other concerns– provide a clear indication of where hazards exist. By investigating incidents and reports, you will identify hazards that are likely to cause future harm.

- Develop a clear plan and procedure for conducting incident investigations, so that an investigation can begin immediately when an incident occurs. The plan should cover items such as:
  - Who will be involved
  - Lines of communication
  - Materials, equipment, and supplies needed
  - Reporting forms and templates
- Train investigative teams on incident investigation techniques, emphasizing objectivity and open-mindedness throughout the investigation process.
- Conduct investigations with a trained team that includes representatives of both management and workers.
- Investigate close calls/near misses.
- Identify and analyze root causes to address underlying program shortcomings that allowed the incidents to happen.
- Communicate the results of the investigation to managers, supervisors, and workers to prevent recurrence.

CONCLUSION

When an accident or incident happens at the workplace, it's too late to discover your safety training didn't stick. Not only has an employee potentially gotten hurt, but so has your company's bottom line. The only way you can ensure you avoid expensive and dangerous accidents and incidents is to make sure your training is grabbing employees' attention, and being committed to memory.

SPOT THE SAFETY VIOLATION

DEFYING THE LAWS OF PHYSICS AND COMMON SENSE

It's almost hard to know where to begin with this one – but once the shock and awe wears off, it's obvious there's a lot wrong with this picture.

First, the workers in this picture aren't wearing any sort of PPE. No hard hats, safety glasses, fall protection, or safety shoes, just to state the obvious.

Second, the obvious unsafe use of a ladder. Only one person should be on a ladder at a time. The area around the ladder's base is not cleared of trip and fall hazards. You should never stand on the top two rungs of a stepladder.

Third, while we don't know for sure, it does look a bit stormy in the background. Lightning and other weather-related hazards could very likely be present. If that's the case, these workers should seek shelter immediately or all three could end up being a lightning rod!