

TOOL BOX TOPICS

GENERAL SAFETY -- HAZARD AWARENESS

January

A hazard is defined as a condition or changing set of circumstances that present a potential for injury, illness, or property damage. The potential or inherent characteristics of an activity, condition, or circumstance which can produce adverse or harmful consequences.

An accident is defined as an unfortunate event often the result of carelessness or ignorance. An unforeseen and unplanned event or circumstance usually resulting in an unfavorable outcome.

There are some key words in these definitions: Unplanned; Unforeseen; Unfortunate; Unfavorable and most importantly POTENTIAL!

I met a person the other day who had fallen from a height of 25 feet. He was fortunate to have escaped this accident with only a badly broken leg. A few weeks ago a worker fell just a couple of feet off a ladder and he passed away. Both of these situations have been discussed to the limit and on several occasions I heard people refer to luck, good and bad! Well, the last time I looked, luck was not an effective accident prevention or loss control technique.

For an unplanned or unforeseen event to take place, there has to be *potential!*. Complacency and taking things for granted are causes of a tremendous number of injuries each year. Recognizing hazards and doing something about them is everyone's responsibility!

So as you begin work, ask yourself:

- Do I have the right tools/equipment for the job?
- Have I inspected my tools/equipment to make sure they are in good repair or am I trying to get by?
- Is the work laid out to provide safe completion of the job?
- Are the materials I am using safe, and do I need additional personal protective equipment such as: safety glasses, gloves, hard hat, respirator, etc.?
- Is there a safer way to accomplish the task?
- Are all necessary equipment guards in place?
- Are written procedures such as lockout/tagout being followed?

BE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR WORK AND MAKE YOUR CHOICES CAREFULLY!!

TOOL BOX TOPICS

GENERAL SAFETY -- HAZARD AWARENESS
January
Training Sign-In Sheet

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Company Name: _____ Given By: _____

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Job Specific Topics: _____

Safety Recommendations: _____

TOOL BOX TOPICS

EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFETY

February

Safety is everyone's responsibility! As an employee, you should:

- a. Learn to work safely and take all rules seriously.
- b. Recognize hazards and avoid them.
- c. Report all accidents, injuries and illness to your supervisor immediately.
- d. Inspect tools before use to avoid injury.
- e. Wear all assigned personal protective equipment.

On the other hand, it is management's responsibility to:

- a. Provide a safe and healthy workplace.
- b. Provide personal protective equipment.
- c. Train employees in safe procedures and in how to identify hazards.

Everyone must be aware of potential hazards on the job:

- a. Poor housekeeping results in slips, trips and falls.
- b. Electricity can cause shocks, burns or fire if not handled properly.
- c. Poor material handling may cause back problems or other injuries.
- d. Tools and equipment can cause injuries if guards or protective devices are disengaged.

Always use the protections that are provided on the job:

- a. Guards on machines and tools keep body parts from contacting moving equipment.
- b. Insulation on electrical equipment prevents burns, shock and fire.
- c. Lockout/tagout assure equipment is de-energized before it is repaired.
- d. Personal protective equipment shields your body from hazards you may face on the job.

In case of emergency:

- a. Understand alarms and evacuation routes.
- b. Know how to notify emergency response personnel.
- c. Implement a procedure for leaving the scene safely so emergency personnel can do their job.
- d. Wipe up spills promptly and correctly.

Safety benefits everyone! By incorporating safety rules, employees avoid injury as well as illness from exposure to hazardous substances. With less injuries, a business can be more productive and profitable. The welfare of the community is also enhanced by providing cleaner air and water and less chance of dangerous accidents that can put lives and property at risk.

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EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFETY
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TOOL BOX TOPICS

Proper Lifting

March

Introduction: Most of us forget the importance of our backs for the enjoyment of a normal, happy and successful life. However, the back contains one of the most critical muscle groups in the body, as well as the spinal cord and associated vertebrae and discs. Everyone working in the building industry must lift materials to either put them into place or to expedite from one location to another. Back injuries are cumulative; a lot of small injuries lead up to the big one. Therefore, it is important to remember the key elements of proper lifting.

Guide for Discussion

Preparing to Lift

- Do you need help? Get help if needed (more people, lift equipment).
- Do you need to stretch before preparing to lift?
- Determine the load capacity.
- Determine your ability to handle the load.
- Wear safe shoes.
- Wear gloves to protect your hands if the surface is rough.
- Make sure you have a clear walkway.

Making the Lift

- Center the load between your legs or shoulders
- Always bend with your legs.
- Keep your back straight.
- Lift with your legs (You can feel your leg muscles doing the work).
- Keep the load close to your body. (Hug the object you are lifting.)

Moving the Load

- Keep your back as vertical as possible.
- Keep the load close to you.
- Don't twist your body – move your feet.
- When lowering your load, bend with the knees and keep the back straight.
- Remember to follow these rules of lifting and you will give your back a break rather than breaking your back.

Additional Discussion Notes:

Remember: The only thing you'll prove by lifting more than you should is that your back is a poor substitute for a forklift. Think before you lift—every time.

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TOOL BOX TOPICS

Electric Tools - Grounds for Concern

April

Each year workers suffer shock when handling electrical tools and equipment. To protect workers against the hazards of electricity, teach them the basic facts about the causes of shock and death. One of the big problems in understanding the dangers of electrical shock is the mistaken belief that only high voltages kill. It's not the voltage that kills, but the amount of current that passes through the body. The condition and placement of the body has a lot to do with the chance of getting a shock.

Water and electricity can be a fatal combination. Damp areas and metal objects can offer good shortcuts for electricity to reach the ground. If a worker's hands are sweaty, if socks and shoes are moist or damp, if the floor is wet, or if the worker is standing in a puddle of water, the moisture will allow more current to pass through the body. If work is to be done with metal objects or in damp areas, workers should recognize the hazards and take necessary precautions. These precautions include rubber gloves and boots, rubber mats, insulated tools, and rubber sheets which can be used to cover exposed metal.

Remembering a few tips can help avoid electrical accidents:

- Treat every electric wire as if it were a live one.
- Inspect equipment and extension cords before each use.
- Take faulty equipment or plugs with bent or missing prongs out of service for repair.
- Only qualified electricians should repair electrical equipment or work on energized lines.
- If a plug doesn't have three prongs or if the receptacle doesn't have three openings, make sure the tool is grounded in some other way before use.
- Never try to bypass an electrical system by cutting off the third prong of a plug.
- Turn off the power and report the smell of hot or burning plastic, smoke, sparks or flickering lights.
- Stop using a tool or appliance if a slight shock or tingling is felt.
- Never disconnect an electrical plug by pulling on the cord.
- Whenever working on an electric circuit, the circuit should be turned off and locked out at the circuit breaker or fuse box to ensure that the circuit cannot be accidentally turned on.
- Those who regularly work on or around energized electrical equipment should be trained in emergency response and CPR.

In wet, winter months, extra caution should be observed when working with electrical equipment or when working near grounded objects.

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Please return form to: Karen Cline @ Housing East Texas, 3800 Stone Road, Kilgore TX 75662 or FAX to 903.983.1440

TOOL BOX TOPICS

AVOIDING ELECTRICAL SHOCKS

May

Electrical hazards can be found in all industries. Avoiding electrical shocks both at home and at work requires awareness of the hazards and a respect for this "Silent Killer." The human body has a low resistance to electricity, making it a good conductor, like most metals. Unlike metals however, the human body does *not* respond well when electricity passes through it. Physical results include thermal burns, disruption of normal heart activity, severe muscle contractions, and even death.

The most common and serious electrical injuries occur when electrical current flows between the hands and feet. This happens when a person touches an energized line. The electrical energy is looking for the shortest path to the ground, and it will pass through the body to the feet to reach it. When this occurs, a person's heart and lungs are frequently damaged by the electrical energy.

Placing an insulator between the energy and the point of physical contact is one method of protection. Porcelain, rubber, pottery and dry wood offer substantial resistance to the flow of electricity, and are therefore good insulators. These materials can often protect a person from electrical shock.

Precautions for avoiding electrical shocks include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Always make sure electric tools are properly grounded or double insulated. The double insulated tool must have an undamaged outer case and be clearly labeled as "double insulated" by the manufacturer.
- Always check to be sure the grounding system is complete. Unless they are designated as double insulated, grounded power tools must be attached to a grounded service circuit. If there is *any* doubt about the grounding, test it! (Ground testers are inexpensive.)
- Use heavy duty grounded extension cords. These cords have two layers of insulation, with reinforcement between the layers. They are less susceptible to damage than house-hold type cords. To check if the cord is heavy duty, check its shape. Most *flat* cords are not heavy duty. Heavy duty cords will have a marking on the insulation such as: "S", "SJ", "SJO", etc.
- Avoid mixing water and electricity! Not only keep cords, tools and working/walking surfaces dry, keep your hands and feet dry as well. The electrical resistance of wet skin is at least 100 times less than dry skin. Wet skin greatly increases the likelihood of severe shock if a person comes in contact with a live circuit. If you must work around water, connect to a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) to automatically shut off the current if there is an abnormal current flow.
- Never work on or around a live electrical circuit. *Lock Out* the power so that *only you* have control over energizing the machine or equipment. Don't take chances.

Remember, electricity strikes without warning-always play it safe!

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TOOL BOX TOPICS

Common Sense Safety

June

There are a number of safety problems common to most workplaces and job sites that can be solved with a little common sense. Planning and thinking ahead can help eliminate most of these hazards. Take a close look at your workplace with these suggestions in mind.

Eliminate junk piles. Organize a clean up program to remove trash, broken parts, and scrap from work areas, walkways, storerooms, and neglected corners. Look for materials that have been stacked improperly. An unstable stack is a real danger to anyone who may be near if the material suddenly falls. Check such things as wood pallets, dock freight, storeroom boxes, construction materials and even office files to see that materials are stacked properly.

Examine all the operations of your workplace to determine if personal protective clothing is needed, then make it readily available. Ear protection, eye protection, hard hats, gloves, safety shoes or other protective clothing and equipment must be worn according to the hazard exposure.

Make sure all electric power tools are grounded. Protect yourself from electric shock by using tools with three-prong plugs, a ground-fault system or double insulation. Never cut off the ground plug on a three-prong plug. Check electrical cords and wires for any damage. Guard power tools and moving machine parts. Tools and equipment should never be operated with the guards or shields removed.

Inspect portable ladders to make sure they are secure and don't shake or wiggle. Nonslip feet are a must. If a ladder seems weak, get rid of it – don't let others use a defective ladder. Mark it defective and throw it away.

Fire extinguishers are a must and should be mounted properly, readily accessible, and in working order. Check fire regulations to make sure they are properly placed and the right type for your work area. When was the last time your fire extinguishers were tested? Extinguisher inspections should be made regularly then tagged to show when and who performed the tests..

Safety meetings are one of the most important parts of a good safety program, so hold them regularly. Impress upon every worker that it's important that they take every precaution to keep the workplace safe. Both employee and employer attitudes toward safety provide a key to a successful safety program. Posters, handouts, and training programs can all be part of your safety communication.

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TOOL BOX TOPICS

Too Hot to Handle

July

In construction, working outdoors in all sorts of weather is just part of the job. Because you can't stop working when it gets hot, it's important to know how to protect yourself from heat and what to do if someone on your crew gets overheated.

There are two main kinds of heat illness, heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Because they require different treatments, learn to tell the difference between the two.

A victim of heat stroke has flushed, dry skin; a rapid heartbeat; loud, rapid breathing; and a high body temperature-105°F (41 E C) or more. The victim may complain of dizziness and headache or may suffer from confusion, convulsions, delirium, or unconsciousness. This is a medical emergency calling for quick action. While one person calls an ambulance, others should get the victim cooled off. Place the victim in a tub of cool water or use a hose or wet cloths to bring the temperature down. Massage the victim's hands and feet toward the heart to stimulate circulation of the cooler blood of the limbs. Dry the victim off when the temperature returns to normal. Repeat the cooling process if the body temperature again rises.

A victim of heat exhaustion looks very different from a heat stroke victim. This person sweats profusely and has pale clammy skin. Body temperature is normal. The victim may feel giddy and nervous, or may vomit or faint. First aid for heat exhaustion is to get the victim to lie in a cool place and sip cool water. Loosen the victim's clothes and call a doctor. A victim who is unconscious or vomiting will need to be taken to a hospital to be treated intravenously.

Heat exhaustion sometimes includes heat cramps-the muscles of the abdomen or limbs knot up and are extremely painful. This is caused by a lack of salt. You can relieve the cramps by massaging the cramped muscles or pressing firmly on them with your hands. If the victim has no other medical condition, you can give half a teaspoon of salt dissolved in 8 ounces of cool water or fruit juice.

Heat-related illness is no fun. And it's usually preventable. Here's what to do to keep healthy in hot weather:

If you're not used to working in heat, start out slowly. Take it easy for a few days. Save strenuous exercise for cooler weather. Drink plenty of water-at least eight ounces (one glass) every 20-30 minutes while on the job. Avoid alcohol and carbonated drinks, which can cause cramps. If you're prone to heat cramps, check with your doctor about replacing the salt you lose sweating. Cut heavy, high-fat foods out of your diet and get plenty of rest. Wear loose, light clothing and a hat if you work in the sun. Pay attention to warning signs-if you don't feel good, take a break.

One more thing-pay attention to each other. You may notice Joe's flushed skin and rapid breathing before he does. And if he has to go to the hospital, guess who gets to do his work?

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ROOFING (HEAT) HAZARDS

August

Roofing work using tar, torches, or welding can expose you to heat, burns, and overexertion that can lead to serious injuries and heat illness.

Dress to protect yourself from heat and burns. Wear light-colored, flame-resistant clothing with long sleeves and cuffless long pants. Wear a hard hat, safety boots with a non-slip sole and heel, and leather or heat-resistant gloves. Face shields, side-shielded safety glasses, and goggles can protect your eyes and a respirator can guard against fume exposures.

Check the weather. Working in high temperatures and humidity can lead to heat illness. Do the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day. Stay hydrated by drinking water frequently. And, take breaks in cool, shaded areas.

To prevent fires, clear flammable material, gases and/or liquids off the roof and have fire extinguishers available. Don't torch directly onto building materials, flashing, or voids in the roof.

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ROOFING (HEAT) HAZARDS

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TOOL BOX TOPICS

CTD's -- HOW CAN YOU PREVENT THEM?

September

Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD's) are strains that may result from long-term repetitive motion or from continually working in an awkward position. Strains commonly occur in the wrists, arms, shoulders or back, affecting the body's joints and surrounding muscles and tendons.

CTD's are said to be today's fastest growing occupational problem, affecting all types of employees, from computer operators to construction workers. Modern equipment, tools and machinery have increased production capabilities in many ways. But in some cases, they have also increased the potential for strain injuries in people. These disorders not only cause great discomfort, they can also affect a person's employability and personal lifestyle choices.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REDUCING YOUR EXPOSURE TO CTD's:

- Do warm-up exercises before beginning physically demanding tasks (take a tip from athletes).
- Plan ahead, if you will be doing a job that is awkward--think of ways to make it easier.
- Rotate your work position, to change how muscles are used during your work shift.
- Use the proper tool for the job to avoid awkward movements and the need for overexertion.
- Take a rest break when fatigue sets in. Just a few minutes can make a difference.
- Carefully stretch tired or overworked muscles to improve circulation and relieve tension.
- When appropriate, use anti-shock or anti-vibration gloves, back supports, wrist supports, or other personal protective equipment that helps prevent cumulative trauma.
- Always use proper lifting techniques. Back strain is one of the most common CTD's.
- When using hand tools keep your wrists in a "neutral" position, as opposed to repeatedly bending them up, down or sideways during work tasks.
- Just because a co-worker is not affected by a physically demanding task, don't ignore messages your body sends you. Although humans share many physical characteristics, people are often different in terms of their physical strengths and weaknesses.

All muscle discomfort and fatigue is not a cumulative trauma disorder. Everyone experiences occasional aches and pains from both work and play-especially when you are not used to the activity. Nevertheless, *awkward*, *repetitive* work positions can result in long-term physical problems, so it's up to you to avoid these in whatever ways you can. If the ache doesn't go away within a day or two, follow the above suggestions.

If you have early symptoms of chronic discomfort, report it immediately to your supervisor. The *sooner* a better tool or work position can be incorporated into your work activities, the sooner those symptoms can be controlled.

Listen to what your body tells you and learn how to avoid CTD's!

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TOOL BOX TOPICS

Watch Your Back October

Back problems can gradually sneak up on you. When you are young and strong, you may think you can lift anything, but years of improper lifting can take a toll on the spine. Eventually, one wrong move can cause permanent damage.

There can be many reasons for back pain including poor lifting techniques, over-exertion, injury, posture, overweight, lack of exercise, weak stomach muscles, and age. However, by practicing the proper safety techniques, you can prevent or eliminate back pain.

If you are having back pain, check with your doctor to find out if there is a medical problem.

The next step in tracking down the cause of back pain is to look at how you are lifting.

- To protect your back against injury, learn and use proper lifting techniques. Your legs should be bent, keeping the back's natural curve (bottom thrust out), while lifting reasonable loads. Never bend or twist while lifting.
- The number one cause of on-the-job injuries is physical overload. These injuries are caused by lifting (too heavy a load or lifting improperly), straining, overreaching, bending, and twisting. Whenever possible, use a mechanical aid, or get help with the load from another worker.
- How is your posture? Poor posture stresses the back. When standing, sitting, or driving, do you slump?
- How fit are you? A sedentary life adds to back pain because the stomach muscles become weak. You need strong muscles to help support the spine, so exercise regularly.
- Watch your weight? Extra weight, especially in the stomach, pulls the center of balance off and stresses your back.

Minor pack pain may be eased or eliminated by taking some of these simple precautions.

Remember, your back is not the culprit. Your lifting technique, fitness, and posture affect how your back feels. If you take good care of a car, it will last a long time before you replace it. You will never be able to replace your back, but with good care, it will last a long time.

TOOL BOX TOPICS

Watch Your Back
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TOOL BOX TOPICS

When Push Comes to Shove

November

Pushing and pulling are common work activities in many work environments. You may be required to push and pull large and small items, levers, cables, boxes, carts and more. Using material handling devices like carts, dollies or hand trucks rather than carrying material is a good idea, but pushing and pulling these devices can strain your back, shoulders and arms if not handled properly.

Many things affect the force needed to start and maintain movement of a load including: the weight of the load, the height where the force is applied (handles, conveyor height), posture (bending forward or twisting when pulling), the direction of the force applied (straight on or at an angle), the slope and condition of the surface, the condition of the item to be moved, and the grip of the worker's shoes on the floor surface.

Use the following tips to reduce the risk of injury when pushing and pulling:

- **Eliminate the need to push or pull** by using mechanical or gravity fed rollers, mechanized carts, vacuum lifts or powered equipment.
- **Push rather than pull.** Pushing a load is generally less stressful on your body because you use the weight of your body and maintain a more neutral posture. When you pull, your body is often twisted and you frequently use only one hand.
- Use devices that **reduce the coefficient of friction** between the object being moved and the surface area. For example, mount appropriate casters on carts and movable furniture, assure smooth unbroken surfaces on counters and shelves, use slip sheets for moving patients and sliders for moving heavy items on carpet.
- **Ensure that surfaces are clean** and free of debris to reduce physical barriers to movement.
- **Use a vehicle or conveyor** that can accommodate the size and weight of the load you are moving. Ensure that the design and type of conveyance is well maintained and appropriate for the item to be moved.
- Ensure that you are not exceeding the recommended force for pushing your cart or hand truck. Measure the forces and **follow recommended guidelines**.
- When possible **apply force from approximately elbow height**. Add handle extensions or provide vertical handles, ensure that conveyor heights are correct, add platforms to workstations or redesign workplaces so that vertical pulls are not above shoulder height or below knee height.

When pushing or pulling heavy objects be sure to use **good body mechanics**:

- Tighten your stomach muscles
- Bend your knees
- Lean in slightly toward the object you are pushing
- Lean slightly away from the object when pulling
- Keep your back and wrists straight
- Use you legs and weight of your body to move the object.

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TOOL BOX TOPICS

Cold Weather Injury Prevention December

Mark Twain made a famous statement: "We all talk about the weather but nobody does anything about it". After all, what can we do? It's that time of year again, cold weather is here, and we cannot change it. However, cold can injure and we can do something about that! Injuries that occur from cold can range from uncomfortable to life threatening. Know what can happen.

INJURY SYMPTOM DESCRIPTION

- **Chilblain** - Painful injury; Skin becomes tender, red, swollen
- **Trench foot** - Serious injury; Extremity becomes numb, amputation potential
- **Frostbite** - Serious injury; Deep layers of skin freeze, tissue damage
- **Hypothermia** - Life threatening; Body core drops below 95°F, death potential

A Healthy Body Is Less Susceptible

- Use moisturizing lotions, lip balm
- Eat nutritious food
- Stay in peak physical shape
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, tobacco
- Stay active to produce more heat
- Keep extremities dry
- Avoid dehydration, drink plenty of water, at least 16 oz. every work hour

Dress Properly

- Proper dress will keep you warm and dry. Wet clothes increase heat loss. The best clothing has good ventilation so moisture can escape.
- Dress in layers
- Wear outer windproof layer
- Wear a liner in your hardhat
- Wear cotton close to the body
- Keep clothes clean
- Wear mittens with liners if possible
- Water resistant boots
- Change socks frequently

Get Out of the Cold

- Take a break inside, if you are shivering
- Work in a shelter, when possible
- Use warming devices, if available
- Work with your back to the wind

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Cold Weather Injury Prevention
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| 12. | |
| 13. | |
| 14. | |
| 15. | |

Job Specific Topics: _____

Safety Recommendations: _____