



The Safety Frontline

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Free Safety Seminar and Expo

The Western Pennsylvania Chapter of ASSE is once again partnering with Shannon Safety to provide technical programs at the 6th Annual Shannon Safety Expo to be held on September 26th at the Hilton Garden Inn at Southpointe. This all day event is FREE unless attendees wish to receive 0.5 CEUs for a charge of \$25.00.

Ten different presentations will be featured on topics such as Risk Management, NFPA 70E, and Fall Protection. In addition, OSHA Regional Area Director Bob Szymanski will give an OSHA update.

Registration is due by September 14th. See the form at the end of this newsletter.

**J&C Safety Consultants
321 South Negley Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15232**

**Phone
412-414-4769**

**Fax
412-362-5268**

**E-mail
pam@jcsafety.com**

**We're on the Web!
www.jcsafety.com**

Hot Enough for You Yet?

I heard my first cicada last night which means the dog days of summer are officially here. So far Pittsburgh, where our office is located, has been relatively cool with a few brief spells of high heat and humidity, but it never hurts to remind your employees about the dangers of working in high temperatures. Coupled with the loss of productivity we typically see in the hot summer months, it can be an all around tough time for everyone. There are lots of easy-to-come-by resources for training your staff – OSHA has a printable Quick Card summarizing crucial information on one small card. (<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3154.pdf>). If you need additional help, please let us know. We have lots of information to help you and your workforce. Call 412.414.4769 or email info@jcsafety.com.

Keeping it Safe!
Pam

What Really Happened at Texas City

A few months ago the U.S Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) released its long-awaited findings on the BP Texas City Refinery Explosion in March 2005 that killed 15 workers and injured more than 150. The massive explosion occurred during a startup of the refinery's octane-boosting isomerization unit. Many of the victims were in or around work trailers located near an atmospheric vent stack.

Among the many significant deficiencies cited by the Board in its 335 page report were operator fatigue, safety deficiencies at the facility, equipment design issues, unsafe placement of work trailers, cuts in maintenance, lack of investment in safety equipment, and poor perceptions of the importance of safety at all levels. Among the many factors, the CSB cited the lack of compliance with OSHA's Process Safety Management Standard (29 CFR 1910.119) as a key problem, which could have prevented the incident.

The OSHA investigation into the incident resulted in an excess of \$21 million in fines and penalties against BP, however, the CSB also took OSHA to task for failing to properly oversee the oil refining industry. In fact, the report called the oversight by OSHA "ineffective", citing a wave of mergers, reorganizations, downsizing, and budget cuts that has been typical of the industry in the past ten years, for creating an ineffective climate for maintaining basic safe working environments.

OSHA has responded to these significant criticisms by creating a new National Emphasis Program (NEP) for the oil refining industry. The program began in June and OSHA has committed to performing an inspection at all of the country's oil refineries by the end of 2008.

You can read the full text of the report at www.csb.gov.

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Obese Workers Injured More Often

We've written in previous issues about the importance of promoting the overall health of your workforce as a cornerstone of your company's safety and health management program and mission. We believe that developing workplace wellness programs can provide for a significant reduction in injuries and illnesses. Data to support this concept is beginning to come in.

Recently we came across a study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that demonstrates how overweight workers may be more prone to workplace injuries than their normal weight counterparts. The study was performed at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health using data from over 7,500 hourly manufacturing workers at 8 different plants throughout the United States.

During the study period of January 2002 to December 2004, a total of 29% of the employees experienced a traumatic workplace injury which resulted in the need for medical treatment beyond first aid and at least one day of time off of work. Of the group experiencing injuries, 85% were classified as obese based upon having an elevated Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a measure of body fat based on individual weight and height. Potential confounding variables controlled for in the study included sex, age, education, smoking, physical demands of the job, plant process and location, time since hire, and time in the job. Injuries to the knees and legs were the most common.

In an abstract, the study authors state, "Workplace safety personnel might consider adding policies or programs that address weight reduction and maintenance as part of ongoing comprehensive workplace safety strategies." We agree. You can find an abstract of this study at <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org>. You must be a subscriber to view the entire report.

OSHA To Cover Public Employees??

Since its passage in 1970, the OSH Act has exempted public sector employees from its oversight unless that State chooses to implement its own OSHA program. Twenty six states work under the Federal OSHA umbrella (including Pennsylvania). This has led to many a debate about the reasonableness of protecting only part of our nation's workforce from unsafe working conditions. Furthermore, the logic behind this exemption has always proven difficult to explain. However, if legislation introduced by both the House and Senate passes, this oddity of the OSH Act will no longer confound us all.

Rep. Ron Andrews (D-NJ) introduced the Fairness for State and Local Workers Act (H.R. 1517) in March requiring non-State Plan States to cover public sector employees. The following month, Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Patty Murray (D-WA) along with Reps. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) and George Miller (D-CA) introduced the Protecting America's Workers Act.

Initial hearings have been held by the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections with broad support for the initiative. It remains to be seen whether the Democratically-controlled Congress will have the ability to push this major piece of legislation through as it navigates many other pressing domestic and foreign issues. In a Republican-controlled Congress, such legislation would not have likely survived to be sent to a Committee, and President Bush has signaled his willingness to veto any current efforts. We'll be sure to keep you in the loop on this major revision, although it is not likely to move forward during the traditional slow down that occurs during the summer months.

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Frontline's Fast Facts

NIOSH is taking the lead in arguing for stricter standards to protect workers from the effects of occupational noise exposure. Here's some of the data they use to support the need for changes in the OSHA standard:

1. 30 million workers are exposed to hazardous levels of noise on the job.

2. 3.3 million mining and construction industry workers are 50-90% hearing disabled by the time they reach age 50.

3. 9 million workers risk hearing loss from chemical agents such as solvents and metals.

4. Hearing loss is permanent because the damage is neurological rather than physical.

5. The Department of Defense and its three military branches use an exposure limit of 85 dBA as do many other countries in the world. OSHA continues to use 90 dBA as its PEL.

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Electrical Standards Now Better Represent Best Practices

Many safety professionals know that compliance with OSHA standards means that a company meets only the minimum requirements in the creation of a workplace that is free from recognized safety hazards. Those who are truly interested in developing a "world-class" safety program have always looked to the various voluntary consensus standards with which to benchmark their efforts. Two such standards are published by the National Fire Protection Association; 70-E and the National Electric Code (NEC).

OSHA has revised Subpart S of the General Industry Electrical Standard found at 29 CFR 1910 to incorporate by reference the 2000 version of 70E and the 2002 edition of the NEC. These changes, which go into effect in August, are the first modifications to the electrical safety standards in 25 years and include alternative methods for classifying Class I hazardous locations and requirements for ground fault circuit interrupters. OSHA decided not to use the most recent version of 70E published in 2004 because of the belief that the public would not have had sufficient notice of the changes in the NFPA document. If OSHA had decided to use the newer version, it would have meant re-opening the rulemaking process, something that would have substantially delayed the changes that have been enacted.

What should you be doing to prepare? If you are already in compliance with both 70E and the NEC, you should be in good shape. But if you are worried that you might have some deficiencies, give us a call and we'll be happy to visit your facility and walkthrough, free of charge, to analyze your situation. If we see problems, we'll tell you how we would suggest fixing them and, of course, offer to help. Just give us a call at 412.414.4769.

FRONTLINE'S FAST FREEBIES



Who says you can't get something for nothing? In every issue we will bring you two freebies. Go get 'em!

1. OSHA has published a new booklet detailing preparations healthcare workers and healthcare employers should be making for the flu pandemic. Spanning almost 100 pages, it is full of everything you need to develop a comprehensive plan. The document can be downloaded and printed off or you can request a printed copy from the publications page. (http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_pandemic_health.pdf).
2. We do lots of training classes and have our own "library" of presentations we refresh and customize with ease. But how can you avoid reinventing the wheel every time you need to do safety training? We suggest going the University of Vermont's Safety PowerPoint Library and searching through their data base of PPTs and other documents that have been downloaded by various authors. The use of these documents is approved by the author and you can easily customize their initial efforts to work for your workplace. As of this issue, there are 256 presentations available for your use. <http://siri.uvm.edu/ppt/powerpt.html>

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