

Employee Safety

A top priority for any employer should be to take the time and initiative to help protect their employees. If an employee becomes injured at work, your business may suffer.

Machinery and Machine Guarding

Machines in the workplace can pose operating hazards. From minor cuts and abrasion to serious lacerations, exposure to machine operations can be detrimental to life, health and productivity.

It is highly recommended that you purchase machinery equipped with guarding or that the guards on existing equipment left intact and employees be trained to use them.

In addition to adequate machine guarding, also consider the following:

- Employees should be trained in the start up, operation and shutdown procedures of all equipment.
- All equipment should be inspected for possible operating hazards before each use. Questionable equipment should not be used and should be reported to management.

Unavoidable circumstances and complications can occur with the machinery. Employees should be trained in:

- Service and maintenance of machinery
- Lockout/tagout procedures

Hazardous Materials

Chemicals and solvents in the workplace can create hazardous conditions. Some combinations of common cleaning chemicals can cause serious life threatening conditions.

- Use a designated storage place for chemicals.
- Read the labels on your products and become familiar with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). MSDS are sheets provided by a supplier that lists important information about the product such as: chemical content, physical characteristics, health hazard and what to do after exposure, fire and explosion hazards, reactivity, cleanup procedures and the personal protective equipment that should be worn while working with the chemical.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When the workplace hazards cannot be eliminated or reduced, personal protective equipment may be necessary. PPE does not eliminate a hazardous situation; it simply creates a protective barrier between the employee and the hazard.

Equipment can be in the form of:

- Safety glasses or goggles
- Gloves
- Boots
- Hearing protection
- Hardhats
- Respirators

Make sure employees that are required to wear PPE are properly fitted and trained.

Ergonomics

Visual Display Terminals

It is important that employees are educated on the proper positioning of all elements within an employee's workspace.

Recommendations include:

- Limit twisting and unnatural body positions by placing everything that is needed regularly in close proximity.
- Make sure that the visual display screen is positioned directly in front of the individual and at a comfortable height, preferably at or just slightly below eye level.
- Position the keyboard and mouse directly in front and close to the individual.
- Adjust the height of the workstation chair so that feet are firmly resting on the floor and weight is evenly distributed over the full seat surface.
- Adjust the armrests of the chair and the position of the keyboard so they are in a neutral alignment, so that the arm, wrist, and hand also take on a neutral position when typing and using the mouse.
- Perform simple exercises throughout the day to help reduce tension or stress that might be built up due to excessive computer work.

Lifting Procedures

Practice the following techniques when lifting:

- Assume a stance that allows the feet to give a wide base of support.

- Bend at the knees to a squatting position. Do not bend from the waist as this puts the back in a vulnerable position.
- Keep the distance between you and the load at a minimum.
- Avoid twisting, jerking motions and lifting overhead.
- Lift only what you are capable of handling. Take your time. Lift, reach and carry carefully.
- Know your weight lifting capacity. Ask for assistance if it feels like or even appears to be more than a one-person job.
- Push up against the object to be lifted to get an idea of how heavy it is before lifting.

Temperature Extremes

When employees are subjected to work in adverse weather conditions such as extreme heat or cold, it can be dangerous. Extra precaution should be taken to accommodate the employees in these conditions.

Heat

When exposed to excessive heat conditions, employees can experience heat-induced ailments such as heat stroke, heat exhaustion and heat cramps.

Preventative measures include:

- Medical screening
- Gradual acclimatization to working in the heat
- Incorporate a work/rest routine
- Continual monitoring of employees
- Drink sufficient amounts of water and fluids that contain electrolytes, potassium, salt and sugar

Cold

Employees working in cold conditions or environments face frostbite, frostnip, and hypothermia.

If you or your employees show any sign of the above conditions, it is vital that you consult a physician or seek medical attention before initiating any kind of treatment or first aid. Taking matters into your own hands, without the advice or assistance of a properly trained and experienced health care provider, is not suggested.

In an Emergency

Sometimes employees are exposed to a hazard that requires immediate attention. The following are some guidelines to help maximize prompt reaction during a critical situation:

- Have an adequately supplied first-aid kit readily available.
- Maintain an easily accessible emergency eyewash station.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers readily available (local fire and police departments and Poison Control Center).