

July 2024

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2024-07-01 TBT Decision Making

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Decision Making

A large number of companies set goals for safety in their workplaces. For many companies, the goal is to have their first-ever zero-injury year; for other companies, it is to finish the year out with no injuries so they can celebrate their fifth-year injury-free. No matter what the goal is, the truth is that it takes careful preparation, commitment, and major effort to achieve an injury-free workplace over time.

Creating a Safe Workplace that Results in Fewer Injuries

Every single day a lot of time and effort is spent on ensuring workplaces are safe. That being said, even if a company invests in the safest equipment, the highest quality PPE, and top-of-the-line training, much effort still needs to occur to ensure the workplace is actually "safe."

This is because so much of achieving safety depends on the decisions made by the employees who work there. Even the most careful worker can create risk through a single poor choice made.

Issues that Can Lead to Poor Decision Making

Humans are flawed, and so is our decision-making process, even on a good day. There is an endless list of issues, challenges, or reasons that can cause any of us not to make the correct choice at a given moment. Here are some common issues individuals can be dealing with that can negatively impact decision-making:

- Complacency
- Overconfidence
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of focus
- Time pressures
- Fatigue
- Illness
- The list goes on and on

All it Takes is One Decision

There are many companies that have achieved a safe workplace and have sustained it for an extended period of time. As stated above, it takes effort on everyone's part to achieve this. Many decisions and actions had to be taken to ensure safety measures were taken during every single work task. All the

effort to work safely can be undermined at any given point by a poor decision made by one person.

Summary

While it is true that one poor decision can result in a serious injury, the same

2024-07-08 Heat Stress and working in heat

Heat cramps

Heat cramps are debilitating painful muscle cramps that are caused by working in a hot environment. They may start while you are working or up to a couple of hours after you leave that environment.

The affected muscles are typically the ones being used the most, like calves, hamstrings, hands, or lower back.

Heat exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water, salt, or both. Left untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.

Symptoms of water depletion (or dehydration) include:

- Excessive thirst
- Headache
- Weakness
- Loss of consciousness

Symptoms of salt depletion include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Muscle Cramps
- Dizziness

Heat stroke

[Heat stroke](#) is the ultimate breakdown of the body's temperature control system. It occurs when the body can no longer control its temperature, resulting in a rapid rise in body temperature that can cause organ damage, brain damage, and even death.

Heat stroke is the most serious type of heat illness on the construction site because it is life-threatening. In non-lethal cases, heatstroke can still result in permanent disability, so it's imperative that those suffering heat stroke symptoms receive emergency treatment.

Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- Fainting
- High Body temp
- Powerful headache

2024-07-8 TBT Heat Stress & Working in Heat

Depending on the time of year and location of the jobsite, construction workers are commonly exposed to high temperatures when working outdoors. The combination of hot weather and intense labor puts many at risk for heat stress and heat-related illness (HRI).

Heat stress may be deadly, and even non-fatal HRI results in more trips to the ER than any other occupational injury each year. In this 5 minute safety talk on heat stress, we'll take a quick look at the different types of heat-related illnesses and teach you how to treat and prevent them.

What is heat stress?

Heat stress is a condition that occurs when the body cannot get rid of excess heat. Your body temperature rises, your heart rate increases, and you may experience a range of symptoms, from sweating (or lack of sweating) to dizziness and collapse.

Heat stress can result in a number of heat-related illnesses, including heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat rash.

What causes heat stress?

Workers at risk of heat stress typically include outdoor workers and workers in warm or hot environments. Construction workers are especially susceptible to heat stress as they perform hard labor outdoors in the summer months.

A shortlist of factors that contribute to heat stress include:

- High outdoor temperature
- Layers of clothing/PPE
- Dehydration
- Decreased urination
- High humidity
- Direct sunlight
- Intensity of work
- Non-A/C workspaces

Heat-related illness symptoms and causes

When left untreated, heat stress can lead to a variety of heat-related illnesses, which can progress rapidly. It's important to know the symptoms and causes of heat-related illnesses so you can be aware and help protect yourself and others.

- Lack of sweating
- Vomiting
- Confusion

Basic chemistry of heat-related illnesses

Keep a close eye on the individual. If they recover with fluids and shade, send them home for the day. If they do not recover, or they deteriorate and show signs of heat exhaustion call 911. Then, move them indoors and into an air conditioned space if possible. Stay with the patient until EMS arrives.

DO NOT put ice-cold water on a construction worker suffering heat exhaustion or heat stroke as this can cause them to go into shock, making the situation worse.

Heat stress prevention best practices

When working in heat on the construction site, it's important to keep the following heat stress prevention tips in mind:

1. Stay hydrated

Drink more water and fluids than you think you need on the construction site in hot or humid months. If you wait to drink only when you are thirsty, dehydration has already begun.

On average, construction workers sweat between 27 oz. and 47 oz. per hour during strenuous work. Compare this amount to 16.9 oz. water bottles you commonly see on construction sites, and it is easy to see how someone could get dehydrated even if they are consuming 1 bottle per hour.

2. Take breaks

Take frequent breaks from the sun and heat. Find and use air conditioned shade when it is available and provide shade with pop-up tents when no other shade is available on your construction site.

It's recommended for tradespeople and construction workers to take more breaks in the summer months to allow their bodies to cool down and give them a chance to hydrate.

3. Take time to adapt

Allow your body to adapt. It can take up to two weeks for a healthy construction worker to acclimatize in a hot environment. Be especially watchful of people who may be new to the environment as they are less likely to be aware of the signs of dehydration and heat stress.

4. Adjust starting time

Adjust the starting time for construction work if possible. Many jobs outdoors start much earlier in the day during the summer months to keep workers out of the intense heat of the afternoon sun.

If the schedule allows, move your starting times or strenuous work time

2024-07-15 TBT Fire Extinguishers

When a fire breaks out, the correct use of a fire extinguisher can be the difference between a minor loss or a major loss. It's easier to put out a small fire than it is to outrun a forest fire.

Responding to fires

When you see a fire on the jobsite, the first steps to take are to pull the fire alarm, call 911, and notify your immediate supervisor. Then, you should assess whether or not the fire is small enough that it can be controlled with a fire extinguisher. Don't waste time taking pictures, posting it on Facebook, or singing in your best Alicia Keys voice – "That house is on fire!"

If you are attempting to extinguish a fire, you should:

Know what type of combustible material is burning

Have been trained to use a fire extinguisher correctly

Make sure the fire is still in the early stages

If the fire is quickly getting out of control, or you do not know what material is burning or how to properly use a fire extinguisher, you should instead evacuate the work area immediately.

Do not enter a building that is on fire under any circumstances.

Classes of fires

There are four different classes of fires, categorized by the type of material and fuel contributing to combustion.

The most likely type we would deal with is Class A.

Class A

Class A fires involve ordinary combustibles such as paper, wood, cloth, rubber, or plastics. Common extinguishing agents for this class are water or dry chemicals.

Class B

Class B fires involve flammable liquids, grease, or gasses. Common extinguishing agents are foam, carbon dioxide, or dry chemicals.

Class C

Class C fires are live electrical fires. Sometimes when fires start this way, a class A combustible may also be involved. However, only a dry chemical extinguisher should be used to extinguish all class c fires. Never use water.

Class D

Class D fires involve combustible metals such as magnesium and sodium. Special extinguishing agents are needed to extinguish class D fires.

P.A.S.S. method

P- Pull the pin

Hold the extinguisher away from your body and release the locking mechanism.

A- Aim

Aim the stream towards the base of the fire. Do not aim at smoke or flames, as this will not put the fire out.

S- Squeeze

Make sure you squeeze the lever slowly and evenly. If you pull the lever too fast you could shoot the stream where you are not intending and waste valuable fire-fighting agents.

S- Sweep

Be sure to sweep the nozzle side to side at the base of the fire to combat and extinguish the fire.

Fire extinguishers limitations

It is important to know the limitations of your fire extinguisher before you have to use it and put yourself in danger. Some limitations include:

A dry chemical fire extinguisher such as the common "ABC" red extinguishers will reach a distance between 5 and 20 feet. It is important for you to know what type of extinguisher is located in your work area and know the effective distance they can be used for in case of a fire at work.

The length of time the extinguisher can be used depends on the model type and weight. Make sure you are familiar with how long the available extinguisher will last.

Fire extinguishers are designed to fight small fires. This means the fire should be about the size of a small trash can if you are looking to extinguish it with a basic fire extinguisher. If it is any larger, you should instead evacuate.

Fire extinguisher inspection tips

The extinguisher should be checked for damage or malfunction by a worker every 30 days. There should also be a more thorough, documented inspection by a fire prevention specialist at least once a year.

Check the pressure when inspecting the fire extinguisher. Every extinguisher has a gauge that has an arrow measuring the pressure, and the arrow should be located within the green section of the gauge. If the arrow is in the red, the extinguisher needs to be flagged and put out of service until it has been recharged.

Check to make sure the pin is still in place. Sometimes the pin can be bumped out of place, which increases the chance of an accidental discharge.

Check for rust on the container and ensure the label is in good, readable condition.

Following these tips should ensure that the extinguisher in your work area will be ready in the case of an emergency.

Fire extinguisher safety starts with you

In the case of a fire at work, it is important to know more than just where the extinguisher is located. Make sure you know how to properly use the extinguisher, know the limitations of the extinguisher, and know how to keep the extinguishers in good working order.

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2024-07-22 TBT Ground Conditions

Ground conditions can alter within a short distance, they can also alter throughout the course of the work due to the amount of use. You must assess the risk and consider the appropriate control methods in place taking into account that the area is likely to alter, especially if you are moving equipment or materials across the worksite.

Types of conditions:

Holes: These can create trip hazards. Holes should be identified at the beginning of the working day, people should be warned about them and they should be filled in as soon as possible.

Slopes: Steps need to be cut into slopes in order to make them manageable. Check the condition of the steps as they will deteriorate with use.

Long Grass: A brush cutter or weed whacker needs to be used in order to clear the area and reveal any potential hazards. There may be hidden ruts, ground bees, or other wildlife in the long grass and brush.

Stones: These create uneven ground conditions and hidden trip hazards. Care should be taken to clear the stones, or an alternative route should be found.

Mud: This can create a slippery and uneven surface. Care needs to be taken. If the site becomes too slippery or uneven, an alternative route should be found.

Flooded areas: Stay away from these areas as it is difficult to know what is beneath the water. If possible, pump out the water. Many of our sites have water ponding during various stages of the projects.

Weather conditions: Weather can affect the ground conditions making the surface uneven, slippery, wet and hidden.

Key Points: You must always try to avoid working on difficult ground conditions. Don't ever take any unnecessary risks if you are unhappy with the conditions. Remember to discuss how ground conditions can be improved and act on this. Vehicles can easily get stuck in poor ground conditions. Always make sure when visiting your site that there are suitable working areas for staging if you need it.

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2024-07-29 TBT Electrical

Cord Safety

Electrical extension cords are used on many worksites, and just like you learned in safety training, should be treated with respect.

Now, people don't pay much attention to them, but...

Extension cords are a leading cause of electrical fires, and if not used properly, there may be serious, negative consequences. I see many cords on jobsites that are routed past or over piles of sawdust and debris.

Always:

- Keep up with our assured grounding program to make sure cords are in useable condition. (This goes for subcontractors as well)
- Inspect cords before use and throw away or properly repair damaged cords.
- Extension cords are not a permanent solution for sourcing power. Unplug and safely store them after every use.
- Remove cords by pulling on the plug, not the cord, when disconnecting them from an outlet.
- Keep extension cords out of high traffic areas like doorways or walkways, where they pose a tripping hazard—we've all been there, right?

Never:

- Use an indoor extension cord outdoors
- Plug multiple cords together. (This lowers the amperage rating significantly)
- Use an extension cord that has a lower wattage rating than the tool being used with it.
- Force a plug into an outlet, say, by bending the ground prong.
- Run an extension cord near water or use a wet extension cord.
- Use a cord that feels hot.
- Drag or drive over a cord.
- Use a damaged cord that has exposed wires.

The correct use of extension cords is an important to on-the-job electrical safety because if used incorrectly, injuries and even death can occur.

Until next time, stay positive and stay safe.

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