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## 10 WORKPLACE SAFETY TIPS FOR 2020

Over 5000 workplace fatalities happen each year; additionally, there are over 2.8 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses. With numbers like this, it's no wonder that many workplaces are in need of safety tips for work. Here are several workplace safety tips every supervisor and employee should be aware of and practice in 2020.

**1. Report unsafe conditions.** Stopping unsafe conditions starts with YOU. Employees must report unsafe conditions to their managers as soon as they notice something isn't right. From wet floors to a ladder that is slightly bent and more, make sure you speak up so you can create a safe workplace for yourself and your colleagues.

**2. Know the latest safety procedures.** Whether there is new safety equipment or updated safety procedures, supervisors and employees must know the new safety procedures and safety topics for work associated with the change. Make sure you fully understand the new equipment/protocol and ask questions for clarification.

**3. Don't take shortcuts.** Workplace safety and handling procedures exist to keep the employees safe. It is essential to use each tool and machine according to instruction; shortcuts will only cause injury and just aren't worth the few minutes you may save. So, be sure you're using the right tool, the correct way. Follow the entire safety procedure each time.

**4. Take regular breaks.** Taking regular breaks makes common sense. When employees are tired, they're more prone to incidents because awareness of their surroundings is hampered by exhaustion. Taking breaks on a regular schedule helps keep employees fresh.

**5. Have emergency protocols.** Emergencies don't often announce themselves, like fire, floods or tornados for example. Therefore, have procedures in place if an emergency should happen:

- Keep aware of impending natural disasters and similar emergencies by checking social media alerts and the Weather Channel.
- Identify risks to yourself and the company. Make the same assessments in your personal situation.
- Review the emergency action plan. If you do not have one in place, create one. Ensure everyone knows where the emergency exits are located and prevent them from being blocked.

**6. Reduce workplace stress.** The American Physiology Association has linked job stress to health problems, burnout, workplace accidents and more. Supervisors should encourage struggling employees to take steps to prevent stress from interfering with an employee's productivity and well-being by taking advantage of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

**7. Wear the proper clothing.** Proper clothing is a must when it comes to workplace safety, whether you're in the office, operating machinery or working with hazardous materials. Proper footwear is just as necessary as well as it prevents you from slipping or falling. Be sure to ask your employer what the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) is when handling a certain job. Be sure to follow proper safety procedures before donning and while wearing PPE. Use the specific types of PPE wherever it is mandated.

**8. Follow ergonomic standards.** Ergonomics refers to adjusting the job to suit an employee's physical needs. Such as the office ergonomics, workspace design, and the work environment to help maintain productivity and safe working conditions. From standing at a machine all day or sitting at a computer desk, the equipment should be at the proper height to avoid straining one's neck. Keyboard height can even affect the back, shoulders, and wrists. Therefore, follow these safety topics for work and ensure your workstation is designed to best suit your needs.

**9. Have a safety team.** Employees can assist supervisors to find solutions to workplace safety issues. Supervisors may want to consider assembling a five or six-person "Safety Team" whose job it is to review the safety procedures in place, plus the building, property and internal protocols which are focused on keeping offices, clients, and employees safe.

**10. Move around!** The U.S. pays \$100 billion each year in medical bills, lost work time and other costs because one in four occupational injuries is related to low-back-strain. Some of these strains relate to lifting and twisting, but that isn't always the case. Sometimes it's about poor posture, like extended sitting in compromised positions. As such, all employees should stand up more and walk around. Taking a 5-minute break every hour to just get up and move around can be highly effective in reducing these types of back injuries.

## News & Notes

### COMMON WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Safety professionals and safety articles often warn employees to be cautious of workplace hazards but often do not define or describe what hazards they should be aware of. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of possible hazardous materials in the workplace. Some industries naturally carry more risks, but below are listed the top 10 most common materials that pose a threat:

- 1) Hazardous chemicals, which include the following: acids, caustic substances, disinfectants, glues, heavy metals (mercury, lead, aluminum), paint, pesticides, petroleum products and solvents.
- 2) Ladders. Most workplaces use ladders at some time, and 8 percent of all occupational fatalities are caused by falls.
- 3) Scaffolding hazards or working from heights. This includes planks giving way or breaking, employee negligence, and falling objects.
- 4) Vehicle accidents. This includes industrial trucks, golf carts, cars, etc.
- 5) Respiratory hazards. These risks are applicable when welding, for example. Unhealthy breathing environments include insufficient oxygen, vapors, gasses, fiberglass, and dust.
- 6) Electrical wiring and systems that can cause electrocution or fires.
- 7) Unexpected start-up or malfunction of machinery and equipment.
- 8) Falling objects from shelves, higher floors, or scaffolding.
- 9) Slippery and wet floors that cause slips and falls.
- 10) Objects on the ground or in doorways, including wires and cords, which result in trips, falls, lacerations, and bruises.

Please don't let one of these hazards go unnoticed or unreported. Any of these could be the difference between staying safe or having an accident. Be on the lookout for these hazards and any others at all times throughout your day.

### RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

- 1) Why did the cannibal break up with his Valentine?
- 2) Why did the banana go out with the prune for Valentine's Day?
- 3) Do skunks celebrate Valentine's Day?
- 4) What did the boy sheep say to the girl sheep?
- 5) What did the girl sheep say back?

Answers on Page 2



"I'm afraid there are some things we can't fix in Photoshop."

February is *American Heart Month*



# EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE HOUSEKEEPING

Here are 11 tips for effective workplace housekeeping.

**1) Prevent slips, trips and falls.** Slips, trips and falls are the second leading cause of nonfatal occupational injuries or illnesses involving days away from work. To protect all employees workplaces should be kept clean and orderly. This includes passageways, storerooms and service rooms. Floors should be clean and dry.

To help prevent slip, trip and fall incidents follow these recommendations: report and clean up spills and leaks; keep aisles and exits clear of items; consider installing mirrors and warning signs to help with blind spots; replace worn, ripped or damaged flooring; consider installing anti-slip flooring in areas that can't always be cleaned; use drip pans and guards wherever necessary. In addition, provide mats, platforms, false floors or other dry standing places where useful. Every workplace should be free of projecting nails, splinters, holes and loose boards. Supervisors and employees should audit for trip hazards and encourage workers to focus on the task at hand.

**2) Eliminate fire hazards.** Employees are responsible for keeping unnecessary combustible materials from accumulating in the work area. Combustible waste should be stored in covered metal receptacles and disposed of daily. Follow these precautionary measures for fire safety: keep combustible materials in the work area only in amounts needed for the job. When they are unneeded, move them to an assigned safe storage area; store quick-burning, flammable materials in designated locations away from ignition sources; avoid contaminating clothes with flammable liquids. Change clothes if contamination occurs; keep passageways and fire doors free of obstructions. Stairwell doors should be kept closed. Do not store items in stairwells; keep materials at least 18 inches away from automatic sprinklers, fire extinguishers and sprinkler controls. The 18-inch distance is required, but 24 to 36 inches is recommended. Clearance of 3 feet is required between piled material and the ceiling. If stock is piled more than 15 feet high, clearance should be doubled; Hazards in electrical areas should be reported to supervision for correction.

**3) Control dust.** Dust accumulation of more than 1/32 of an inch – or 0.8 millimeters – covering at least 5 percent of a room's surface poses a significant explosion hazard, according to the Quincy, MA-based National Fire Protection Association. This dust accumulation is about as thick as a dime or paper clip.

**4) Avoid tracking materials.** Work-area mats – which can be cloth or sticky-topped – should be kept clean and maintained. This helps prevent the spread of hazardous materials to other work areas or home. Check all mats to ensure they are not tripping hazards.

**5) Prevent falling objects.** Protections such as a toe board, toe rail or net can help prevent objects from falling and hitting workers or equipment. Other tips include stacking boxes and materials straight up and down to keep them from falling. Place heavy objects on lower shelves and keep equipment away from the edges of desks and tables. Also, refrain from stacking objects in areas where workers walk, including aisles. Keep layout in mind so workers are not exposed to hazards as they walk through areas.

**6) Store materials properly.** Storage areas should not have an accumulation of materials that present hazards for tripping, fire, explosion or pests. Some workers make the mistake of storing ladders or other items inside electrical closets where they can block an electrical panel, creating a fire hazard. Unused materials and equipment should be stored out of the way of workers. Avoid using workspaces for storage. And remember to put everything back in its proper place.

**7) Use and inspect personal protective equipment (PPE) and tools.** Wear basic PPE – such as closed-toe shoes and safety glasses – while performing housekeeping. Determine what type of PPE to don based on the potential risks. Regularly inspect, clean and fix tools. Remove any damaged tools from the work area.

**8) Determine frequency.** All workers should participate in housekeeping, especially in terms of keeping their own work areas tidy, reporting safety hazards and cleaning up spills, if possible. Before the end of a shift, workers should inspect and clean their workspaces and remove unused materials. The volume of debris or contaminants the workplace releases can help determine the frequency of housekeeping.

**9) Create written rules.** Housekeeping policies should be put in writing. Written protocols could specify which cleaners, tools and methods should be used.

**10) Think long-term.** Housekeeping should be more than a one-time initiative – it should continue through monitoring and auditing. Keep records, maintain a regular walkthrough inspection schedule, report hazards and train employees to help sustain housekeeping. Set goals and expectations, and base auditing on those goals.

**11) Clear clutter.** A cluttered workplace can lead to ergonomics issues and possible injuries because workers have less space to move. Cluttered areas often result in cut and laceration injuries because the employee does not have sufficient room to move around. Employees should return tools and other materials to storage after using them and dispose of materials that are no longer needed. Keep aisles, stairways, emergency exits, electrical panels and doors clear of clutter, and purge untidy areas. Empty trash receptacles before they overflow.

## SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

We all like to get our work done without unnecessary effort, getting the most out of the time and energy we spend on each task. And sometimes this attitude helps us find a better way of getting things done.

But at other times, when it leads us to take shortcuts, it can put us on a direct route to trouble. All of us at some time or another have exposed ourselves to possible harm by shortcutting rather than taking the few extra steps required by the safe way. As kids, we hopped the fence instead of using the gate; now we cross the street between the intersections.

A successful shortcut—meaning one that results in no damage—nevertheless has a downside. It gives us the feeling that we can always substitute the quick way for the tried-and-true safe way and get out of it in one piece. Unfortunately, that feeling can be misleading.

Take the case of the worker on a ladder who is almost finished with the job except for just a little bit that can be done by reaching farther than the safety guidelines call for. It's decision time: get down, move the ladder, and climb up again, or take a chance.

What are the possible outcomes? The worker may luck out and finish the job by reaching, with no trouble. Or leaning too far to the side may cause the ladder to topple and the worker to fall, resulting in a concussion, a broken leg, a broken neck or worse.

What kind of choice was that? One way, the safe way, the odds are 100 to 1 in your favor. There's no way of knowing the exact odds on a given shortcut—but it's surely less than 100 to 1. So the decision to take a chance was not a wise one. Risking your neck to save a few minutes of time is a bad gamble.



"Figures, doesn't it? I've been perfectly healthy since I've met my deductable."

## RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS

- 1) She didn't suit his taste.
- 2) Because he couldn't get a date.
- 3) Of course they do! They're very scent—imental!
- 4) "I love ewe!"
- 5) "You're not so baaaa-d yourself!"

## QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

Only one life,  
that soon is past.  
Only what's done  
with love  
will last.

Happy Valentine's Day