LABORSAFE
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A guide for health & safety at home & on the job

WORK SAFELY IN THE SUN

Summer may be winding down, yet the same safety considerations remain as during the peak of summer's heat. That means we need the same precautions and protections.

The sun is still hot most days, especially from noon on, so sunscreen, proper clothing, eyewear and hydration remain important on the job.

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Apply waterproof sunscreen, with an adequate protection number for your skin type, to face, ears, neck and hands. Long sleeves provide additional protection from the sun.

Your eyes also need protection against bright sunlight. Wear sunglasses when the sun is low in the sky in the morning and late afternoon and your hard hat won't provide the shade it does when the sun is more directly overhead.

Drink plenty of water to ensure proper hydration and avoid heat exhaustion, caused primarily by dehydration, and heat stroke, which can be fatal. Electrolyte-replacement drinks may be beneficial, but avoid carbonated drinks with high sugar content because these may actually contribute to dehydration.

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Shedding more light on the subject

For additional information on health hazards from too much exposure to sunlight, consult the Laborers' Health and Safety Fund of North America Life Line article, "Something New Under the Sun," by Kathleen M. Conlan MS. As Conlan notes:

- "Exposure to solar radiation is the single most significant risk factor for the development of skin cancers of all sorts, including deadly melanoma. Data show that outdoor workers are more than twice as likely to suffer from non-melanotic skin cancers as indoor workers."
- "Now that the issue has been opened for full discussion, the stories of Laborers who have spent their lives working outdoors in construction only to face an anxious retirement, repeated surgery and, sometimes, a sad and painful death due to skin cancer are, unfortunately, commonplace."

Remember, we can't relax our hot weather precautions just because of what the calendar tells us. As long as our construction season lasts, we have to be aware of potential heat-related hazards to our health and safety and protect ourselves.

To access additional skin care information, visit the Laborers' Health and Safety Fund of North America's Web site at www.lhsfna.org, or call the New York State Laborers' Health & Safety Trust Fund at (800) 797-5931. H&S

USE PLENTY OF PROTECTION

Sun protection factor, or SPF, measures the length of time the lotion protects against skin reddening from UVB, compared to how long the skin takes to redden without protection.

If it takes 20 minutes to burn without protection, using an SPF 15 sunscreen will prevent burning 15 times longer – about five hours. To maintain and maximize protection, reapply sunscreen every two hours.

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends an SPF of at least 15, which blocks 93 percent of UVB. SPFs higher than 30 block only 4 percent more UVB, and are advisable for sun-sensitive individuals, skin cancer patients and people at high risk of developing skin cancer.

For a free skin cancer prevention kit, write to:

Laborers' Health and Safety Fund
Health Promotion Division
905 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006

TRENCH SAFETY

Don't get stuck in a rut

DID YOU KNOW?

The fatality rate for excavation work is 112% higher than the rate for general construction

Source: www.osha.gov

'Daily inspection of trenches and excavation sites is absolutely necessary to avoid cave-ins, hazardous atmospheres, failure of protective systems and other unsafe conditions.'

Trenches are very common on construction sites and are necessary wherever buried utilities are constructed or repaired. They are usually required for laying water lines, sewage pipes and telecommunication cables. Also, trenches are often required whenever a part of a building or other structure is constructed below grade.

OSHA defines a trench as a narrow excavation (in relation to its length) made below the surface of the ground. The depth is greater than the width, but the width of a trench (measured at the bottom) is not greater than 15 feet.

Cave-ins are perhaps the most feared trenching hazard. But other potentially fatal hazards exist, including:

- asphyxiation due to lack of oxygen in a confined space
- inhalation of toxic fumes or gases from inadequate ventilation
- drowning from water accumulation
- electrocution or explosions from contact to underground utilities

Trench protective systems – shoring

Shoring is the support system for trenches, and often the first line of defense against cave-ins. Shoring systems are used to prevent movement of soil, underground utilities, roadways and foundations. A typical shoring system consists of posts, wales, struts and sheeting. There are two basic types of shoring: timber and aluminum hydraulic.

Daily inspection of trenches and excavation sites is absolutely necessary to avoid cave-ins, hazardous atmospheres, failure of protective systems and other unsafe conditions. When inspecting, be sure to:

- evaluate soil conditions
- contact utilities (gas, electric) to locate underground lines
- test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases; ensure adequate ventilation or respiratory protection is available
- provide safe access into and out of the excavation
- provide appropriate protections if water accumulation is a problem
- check the site daily at the start of each shift, following a rainstorm and after any other hazard-increasing event
- keep excavations open the minimum amount of time needed to complete the project H&S

For more information please visit http://www.osha.gov.

PREVENTING STROKE:

Know the signs; beware the risks

'People with the greatest risk of stroke typically are over age 55, male and African-American, with diabetes and a family history of stroke."

Stroke is a cardiovascular disease that affects the arteries leading to and within the brain. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts.

People with the greatest risk of stroke are those over the age of 55 and people with high blood pressure, particularly if their blood pressure is not well controlled. People with heart disease or diabetes also have a higher risk. Men are at a greater risk than women. If you have one of those risk factors, it is important that you take steps to lower your risk.

The statistics

- Every 45 seconds, someone in America has a stroke.
- About 700,000 Americans will have a stroke this year.
- Stroke is the nation's #3 killer and a leading cause of severe, long-term disability.

The signs

- numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on the side of the body
- confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- trouble seeing in one eye or both eyes
- trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- severe headache with no cause

Knowing your blood pressure is a key part of stroke prevention.

Treatable medical disorders that increase the risk of stroke

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- coronary heart disease and high cholesterol
- sleep disordered breathing — sleep apnea
- personal history of stroke

Prevention guidelines

- Know your blood pressure.
- Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (an irregular heart beat that changes heart function and allows blood to collect in chambers of your heart).
- Quit smoking.
- Drink alcohol in moderation.
- Know your cholesterol.
- Control diabetes with diet and doctor's recommendations.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a diet that includes low-sodium and low-fat foods. H&S

For more information, please visit www.stroke.org and ww.strokeassociation.com.

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