

# LABORERS SAFE

FALL 2007

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

## SAFETY ON THE JOB –

### Demolition Work

**D**emolition work may be the most dangerous work that Laborers do. When Laborers must do demolition work on scaffolds or inside unstable buildings, the hazards become even more significant than in open work areas.

Demolition work requires high-impact power tools that carry significant risk of injury. This kind of work also produces a high incidence of falling and flying debris. In addition, demolition work increases the risk of serious back and other musculoskeletal injuries.

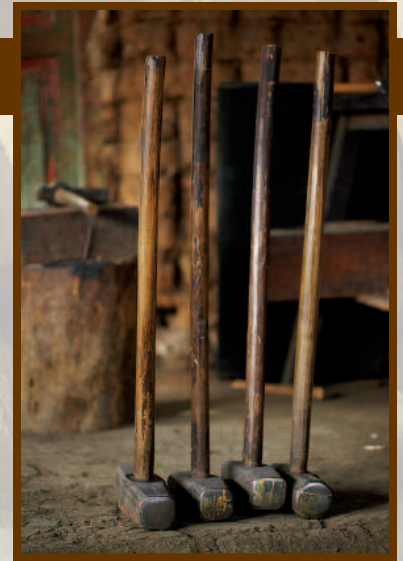
#### The hazards are many and serious:

- ↳ Demolition debris falling from above or flying from unpredictable directions;
- ↳ Long, tiring periods of standing, holding and carrying;
- ↳ Awkward body positions aggravated by bending, stooping, contorting and straining to use tools above shoulder level;
- ↳ Vibration of power tools;
- ↳ Injuries from mishaps with power tools and impact tools;
- ↳ Cramping from prolonged static postures, such as holding down power tool triggers for long periods; and
- ↳ Bruising and musculoskeletal injuries from propping power tools in position with the body.

Each tool that Laborers use in demolition work requires its own protection, in addition to the standard hard-hat, eye protection and steel-toed boots that should be automatic on all job sites.

More and more power tool suppliers are devising tool extenders and suspension systems to reduce the strain of working with heavy power tools above shoulder height – a very tiring posture. Take advantage of this adaptation.

To reduce fatigue, distraction and consequent injuries, take frequent short breaks during demolition work.



**Demolition is dangerous but can be done safely. Always wear personal protective equipment.**


#### When using sledgehammers:

- Wear a dust mask, and
- Wear anti-vibration, non-slip gloves.

#### When using power drills:

- Suspend power tools if the work is above shoulder height, and
- Use trigger extenders to allow several fingers to depress the trigger.

#### When using chipping guns:

- Pad body parts, typically the thigh, used to amplify pressure on the chipping gun. 

# EXERCISE YOUR BRAIN

## FOR MENTAL HEALTH

**M**ore Americans face threats to their continued mental well-being as Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia rob more people of memory and mental function. Starting at age 50, our brains actually shrink in volume, and approximately four million people in the United States have some form of dementia.

There are clear warning signs of mental deterioration:

- Memory loss that affects on-the-job performance, particularly short-term memory;
- Problems doing such basic tasks as moving around a familiar place or doing routine household chores;
- Disorientation;
- Difficulty remembering words;
- Faulty judgment or difficulty with abstract thinking;
- Losing things; and
- Mood swings, irritability, passivity or personality changes.

If you have noticed any of these difficulties and changes in yourself or in someone close to you, make an appointment with your physician for a checkup. The close connection between physical health and mental health means positive lifestyle choices can help protect your mental health.

**Exercise regularly.** Aerobic activity increases blood flow and the delivery of nutrients to the brain. Recent studies have showed aerobic fitness may reduce the loss of brain tissue that is common in older people.

**Eat healthy.** Avoid sugar and saturated fat and eat lots of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, especially leafy green vegetables. Some studies indicate that green and black teas, folic acid and ginkgo biloba are helpful as well.

Vitamins that occur naturally in food are more effective than those taken as supplements in pill form. The best way to get these beneficial antioxidant vitamins and the other phytochemicals (C, E and beta-carotene) is as part of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.



**Learn.** Read, study a language or take up a musical instrument. Crossword puzzles and board games have proved useful in preserving mental sharpness. Turn off the TV and read instead.

**Sleep enough.** Getting adequate rest is important for maintaining general physical health, and physical health is vital to mental health.

**Relax and reduce stress.** Stress has been identified as an important threat to both physical and mental health. Reducing stress through such relaxation techniques as meditation, yoga and solitude can be very beneficial.

**Enhance your memory.** Use underlining in books to reinforce key points, use mnemonic tricks to associate words and

concepts, and make checklists for tasks that are important to remember. Writing down new information moves it from short-term memory to long-term memory.

**Socialize.** The stimulation of interacting with others helps maintain brain function. Conversation and company are important and useful forms of mental stimulus to help keep people mentally sharp.

**Organize.** Designate places for important, can't-lose items

such as keys and cell phones. Use checklists for medications and items to pack for travel. Planning on paper helps both to organize thought and reinforce memory.

Watch for the warning signs, adopt these useful strategies for preserving mental sharpness, and improved long-term mental health will enhance the quality of life in older age. 🌞





# STORE FOOD SAFELY

## for Healthy Eating

**T**hankfully, everybody recovered from eating Uncle Ernie's bad egg salad at the big summer barbecue. But it is important to remember, food safety is important year round, not just when heat is a factor.

Approximately 76 million Americans suffer annually from what is commonly called food poisoning. Actually, food poisoning is more like a food infection. The illness is caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites in the food. Common kinds of food poisoning cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. A more serious form, botulism, often has nerve symptoms rather than digestive symptoms, and some kinds of food poisoning resemble the flu.

Food intolerances or allergies are another concern. Some people are sensitive to foods that don't bother others.

Careless storage or preparation of food can cause food poisoning and it can be serious. Food poisoning kills 5,000 Americans every year, while 325,000 are hospitalized for it, and it costs \$35 billion annually in medical costs and lost productivity.

We can prevent food poisoning through proper storage and preparation of food. Washing hands before preparing food and carefully cleaning equipment such as knives, cutting boards, blenders and food processors, and pot and pans before use are simple, common sense precautions for preparing food safely.

### The proper storage of food is more complex.

**The U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition recommends these general precautions:**

- ✓ Buy foods before their "Sell By" or expiration dates;
- ✓ Follow handling instructions on the packaging of each product;
- ✓ Keep meat, including poultry, in its package until just before use; and



- ✓ Over-wrap meat and poultry in airtight, heavy-duty foil, plastic wrap or freezer paper if you plan to keep it frozen longer than two months. As for recommended storage times, let's start with the ingredients for Uncle Ernie's egg salad. Fresh eggs stay fresh up to four weeks refrigerated, while hard-cooked eggs stay fresh for a week in the refrigerator, and neither freezes well. Mayonnaise lasts for two months refrigerated and also doesn't freeze well.

Fresh meats last three to five days refrigerated and three to 12 months frozen. However, our barbecue favorites won't last as long.

Hamburger and other ground meats only last one or two days, refrigerated, and three to four months frozen. An unopened package of hot dogs will last two weeks refrigerated, an opened package only a week. Meat and poultry leftovers last three to four days refrigerated, and several months if frozen, while fresh fish and shellfish only last one or two days in the refrigerator and several months in the freezer.

Breads last two to three weeks refrigerated, and two to three months frozen – longer than other baked goods, which may last only a few days even in the refrigerator.

Butter lasts two to three months refrigerated, and up to a year in the freezer – longer than other dairy products, though some aged cheeses last as long as butter when refrigerated or frozen.

**Unfortunately, food safety is an area where we can be "penny wise and pound foolish" – Don't be reluctant to dispose of food if its condition is questionable. It's always preferable to dispose of food too early instead of too late. Remember Uncle Ernie's barbecue?**



# RESPIRATORY SAFETY

## ON THE JOB

**R**espiratory safety was an occupational health concern long before the rescue and recovery workers working “on the pile” after the 9/11 terrorist attacks began developing problems.

Lung disease is the number one work-related illness in America in severity and frequency. Occupational lung cancer kills 15,000 to 20,000 workers annually, making it the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women.

In addition to lung cancer, workplace hazards cause other potentially serious occupational lung problems:

- **Asbestosis** – caused by inhaling asbestos fibers, formerly used in insulation;
- **Silicosis** – caused by inhaling silica dust found in stone, clay and sand, and commonly found in blasting areas; and
- **Occupational asthma** – caused by exposure to various vapors, gases, fumes and dust that can trigger an attack.

Engineering and administrative controls to prevent exposure to airborne contaminants by

requiring air circulation and filtration are preferred. But where these precautions are impractical, employers must provide personal protective equipment for workers.

There are two basic types of personal protective equipment designed to ensure the safety and health of the lungs:

- **Respirators that supply oxygen and**
- **Respirators that remove toxic substances.**

Regulations of the U.S.

Department of Labor

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) require an estimated five million American workers to wear respirators at approximately 1.3 million workplaces throughout America.

New York state regulations also require safety monitors at the entry to hazardous, enclosed work areas where airborne contaminants may be found, to initiate alarms, rescues and flushing procedures, if needed. 🌞



**It's important to ensure that personal respiratory protective equipment be of an approved type and well maintained, and that it be carefully fitted for maximum effective protection. Laborers should consistently use this equipment, as well as face and skin protection, wherever and whenever toxic airborne contaminants may occur on the job.**

