

LABORSAFE

SPRING/SUMMER 2008

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



ASPHALT AWARENESS

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BURNS AND FUMES

According to the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA), about 94 percent of the nation's roads and highways are surfaced with asphalt. Molten paving asphalt is 250 to 350 degrees and roofing asphalt is even hotter, 450 degrees.

Burns are a major hazard associated with asphalt, so Laborers working with this material need to be careful and protect their skin from direct contact with hot asphalt.

Asphalt fumes can cause eye and throat irritation, especially when the mix is at a higher temperature or being applied in enclosed spaces such as underpasses or tunnels. Some of the materials added to asphalt can also be irritating, such as crumb rubber from old tires.

Several studies are currently underway to evaluate possible long-term health effects from asphalt. A recent study looking at cancer in laboratory rats exposed to high levels of asphalt fumes found no evidence of any cancer risk. A large study of asphalt workers is currently underway in Europe.

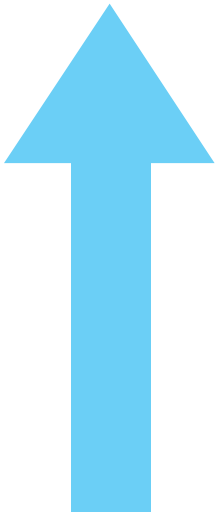
In order to make sure that people working with asphalt are protected while this research is being done, the Laborers'

Union has worked with the National Asphalt Pavement Association to lower exposures by jointly developing an OSHA standard requiring that ventilation equipment be installed on all new highway class pavers.



Another exciting development that reduces asphalt fume exposures is the introduction of "warm mix" — asphalt that can be spread at much lower temperatures. Several companies in the United States are testing these warm mix asphalts, which also reduce energy costs and allow a longer paving season. Hopefully, the use of these warm mix products will become more widespread over the next few years. 📌

CHOLESTEROL AND YOU: WHO'S IN CONTROL?



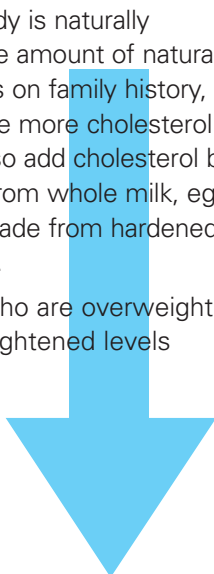
Your blood cholesterol number is more important than your credit score or any other number in your life.

Cholesterol is a type of fat found throughout the body. We need it to produce hormones and Vitamin D and to digest fats.

High cholesterol becomes a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke when it accumulates in our arteries, increasing blood pressure and reducing flow. Protecting against these life-threatening conditions means maintaining your cholesterol level in a healthy range.

Most cholesterol in the body is naturally produced within the body. The amount of naturally occurring cholesterol depends on family history, and many of us naturally make more cholesterol than we need. Many of us also add cholesterol by eating foods: dairy products from whole milk, egg yolks, meats and trans fats made from hardened (hydrogenated) vegetable oils.

People with diabetes or who are overweight or inactive also may have heightened levels of cholesterol.



So, what's a high cholesterol number?

Cholesterol is measured in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL). A total blood cholesterol level (all types of cholesterol, together) of less than 200 mg/dL is desirable, 200-239 is borderline high and 240 is high.

For LDL (low density lipoproteins, or bad cholesterol), less than 100 mg/dL is optimal, 100-129 is above optimal, 130-159 is borderline high, 160-189 high and more than 190 very high.

For HDL (high density lipoproteins, or good cholesterol), more than 60 mg/dL is optimal, 40-59 is desirable and less than 40 is a major risk factor for heart disease.

For triglycerides (which can also raise the risk of heart disease), less than 150 mg/dL is normal, 150-199 is borderline high, 200-499 is high and 500 or higher is very high.

If your family has a history of heart disease and stroke, high cholesterol may be a family health risk factor. Ask your doctor about cholesterol screening at your next regular physical. Your doctor might recommend more exercise or a change of diet – reducing meats and dairy products, for example – or prescribe a medication. Cholesterol screening is easy and inexpensive, and it can be a lifesaver.

“HEALTHY FOODS”

Myths and Reality

Sorry, but some foods sold as healthy simply aren't. Here we poke holes in some myths and serve up some healthy recommendations. Keep these in mind when you pack your lunch, or when the “roach coach” drives on the site.

First off, you're generally better off brown bagging your lunch since you can control your choices that way and take care of your nutritional needs and not just your hunger.

Packing a lunch? Good, but don't be fooled by the myth that low-fat peanut butter is healthier for you. OK, so you're making PB&J for your kids' school lunches in the morning, why not make a couple extra for your own lunch-bag? Depends on the peanut butter. The kind made just from peanuts is high in both protein and fats, but it's a kind of fat your body needs. To reduce the

fat in peanut butters, most manufacturers skim off the fat but substitute “icing sugar” as filler. “Low fat” may mean “high sugar.”

Another myth: Tea drinks are healthier than sodas. Don't believe this one, either. Filling your cooler with tea drinks may seem healthier than packing sodas. But the healthy antioxidant qualities of brewed teas unfortunately don't carry over into bottled teas, which may have as much sugar as sodas do. Some bottled tea products have very little tea at all and are often made with concentrates and essences that may not bring the same benefits as brewed teas. As with everything you plan to eat or drink on the job, read the label.

If brown bagging doesn't work for you and you have to buy lunch at the site, remember that a mobile cafeteria generally offers foods that are fast and convenient instead of nutritious. However, you can find nutritious things when it rolls onto the site, and you can ask for upgrades, for good stuff they don't carry until you ask for it.

For breakfast, you'll find mountains of baked goods there, from plain to piled high with frostings and stuffed with fillings. You'd be better off grabbing a piece of fruit or eggs sandwiched inside an English muffin – which has half the calories of two slices of bread. Go for whole wheat, though; they're more nutritious than white ones.



For lunch, stay away from processed meats and sugary desserts. Snacking on pretzels is healthier than chips or nuts, but not by much. OK, so pretzels are lower in calories than those other bags hanging on the snack display (around 110 calories per ounce). But they can also raise your blood sugar faster than jellybeans or ice cream. Diabetics, beware!

Some “roach coaches” offer salads, but you have to be careful about these. When you reach past the sandwiches on the rack to the salad containers, remember that pasta salad often is made with white-flour pasta so it's like mixing healthy vegetables with white bread. The more vegetables the better, and if you must include pasta, make it whole-wheat.

Also, salads sold at fast-food places may have more calories than their burgers because their dressings are full of fats. “Low-fat salad dressing” isn't necessarily better for you, either. Reducing the fat cuts calories, but it also removes nutrients and antioxidants. You're better off using olive oil or canola oil. 🌿



RAIN SAFETY

WORKING SAFELY WHEN IT'S WET

Working in the rain brings its own special hazards and requires special attention to safeguards. Rain reduces visibility and traction, increases the risk of electrical short circuits, threatens the integrity of earthen structures and increases the danger of hypothermia in colder weather.

The most important precautions to ensure workplace safety during rainy conditions are coordinating with other trades and ensuring the consistent wearing of safety footwear with high-traction soles. Check in with supervisors of other trades, as well as your own, for updates on how rain may change working conditions for the day. Since moisture reduces friction on all surfaces, enhancing traction with the proper footwear becomes paramount in rainy conditions.

To ensure clear visibility and the capacity to detect hazards as they occur, regularly clear the inside surfaces of protective eyewear from any condensation that may accumulate and obscure your vision.

Falls are a hazard under any conditions, particularly on scaffolds. However, as noted, rain increases the likelihood of slips and falls by reducing the adhesion of footwear to most surfaces – especially metals. To reduce the risk of falls while working in the rain:

- **Wear non-slip boots with high-traction soles – we can't emphasize this too much.**
- **Take extra care to ensure the presence of standard fall-protection systems such as guardrails.**
- **Verify the security of personal fall-protection.**

Rain increases electrical hazards, especially where power tools are being used and wiring is being installed. To reduce the potentially increased risk of electrical hazards during rain:

- **Whenever possible, avoid using power tools in the rain or around standing water.**
- **Coordinate with electricians on the job during rainy conditions.**
- **Avoid running electrical cables through standing water.**
- **Avoid touching or stepping on metal, including scaffolding supports and decks or re-bar. These may carry live current from equipment or wiring that has been short-circuited by rain. To a lesser extent extremely wet wood may also carry live current.**

Heavy rains may weaken trench walls of excavations and increase the risk of cave-ins. To protect yourself from potential rain-induced cave-ins:

- **Avoid working under extremely sloping ground or overhangs, especially around loose sand or disturbed soil from excavation.**
- **Work in pairs to ensure rapid assistance.**
- **Always follow OSHA safety standards and shoring requirements**

Laborers working in cold weather should beware of hypothermia, and remember that rain accelerates the cooling of the body. To avoid excessively rapid cooling due to rain:

- **Wear full-body rain suits where appropriate, and waterproof boots and gloves.**
- **Take shelter in warming rooms regularly, loosening your rain gear to allow water vapor to escape and avoid overheating.**
- **Monitor yourself and fellow Laborers around you for signs of hypothermia: shaking, numbness of the extremities, lethargy.**

Laborers' Safety Videos Available

Watch and Learn

Five short videos that the New York State Laborers' Health & Safety Trust Fund produced are now available for viewing. These educational videos are aimed at improving safety awareness by discussing issues related to scaffolds, noise, fall protection, eye injury and heat stress. Their goal is to help all Laborers better understand these issues and enhance safety on the job.

For members, they will refresh the safety knowledge of those already trained in safety. For apprentices, they will introduce safety concepts and consciousness. For prospective members, they will provide a general overview of safety information and drive home the message that the Laborers are extremely safety conscious, on the job and off. To see these educational safety videos, contact your business manager.



HEALTH & SAFETY

LABORSAFE is a publication of the NYS Laborers' Health & Safety Trust Fund.

www.nysliuna.org

union bug goes here