

# LABORSAFE

FALL/WINTER 2009

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



## Bottom line:

Swine flu is less deadly overall than public health experts first feared. But it makes good sense to get vaccinated against both seasonal flu and swine flu.

## GOOD NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR-ROUND FLU SEASON

Until swine flu – Influenza A (H1N1) – broke out in Mexico in March 2009, flu and flu shots seemed seasonal. When kids went back to school or college, reminders to get a flu shot started popping up, seeking to minimize the upcoming winter flu season.

Ordinary seasonal flu is bad enough: Every year, about 200,000 people are hospitalized with flu symptoms across America, and 36,000 die. Now, here comes swine flu, and it infected more than a million Americans, in the spring and summer of 2009. And it's back this fall. Experts anticipate we may have two epidemics this winter – H1N1 and seasonal flu – requiring two different flu shots.

Oldsters are usually endangered more by seasonal flu than younger people. But with swine flu, people over 60 seem to have some immunity to the virus while younger people don't.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 159 million Americans are at high risk for H1N1 including:

- Pregnant women,
- Those younger than 24, or who are caring for infants,
- People with high-risk pre-existing medical conditions, such as diabetes and auto-immune conditions, and
- Health-care workers.

Young or old, healthy or frail, these steps can help you avoid the flu:

1. Wash Your Hands
2. Cover Your Cough
3. Don't Touch Your Face
4. Stay Away from People Who are Sick

## However, there is good news about swine flu.

A vaccine is now available. Pregnant women, young children and those with complicating medical conditions will get the first rounds of the vaccine, but additional supply is expected to follow. The H1N1 vaccine will not protect against seasonal flu. For that protection, people still need the 2009 seasonal flu vaccine.

# Safety is NOT a Temporary Issue



Hardhat



Protective Eyewear



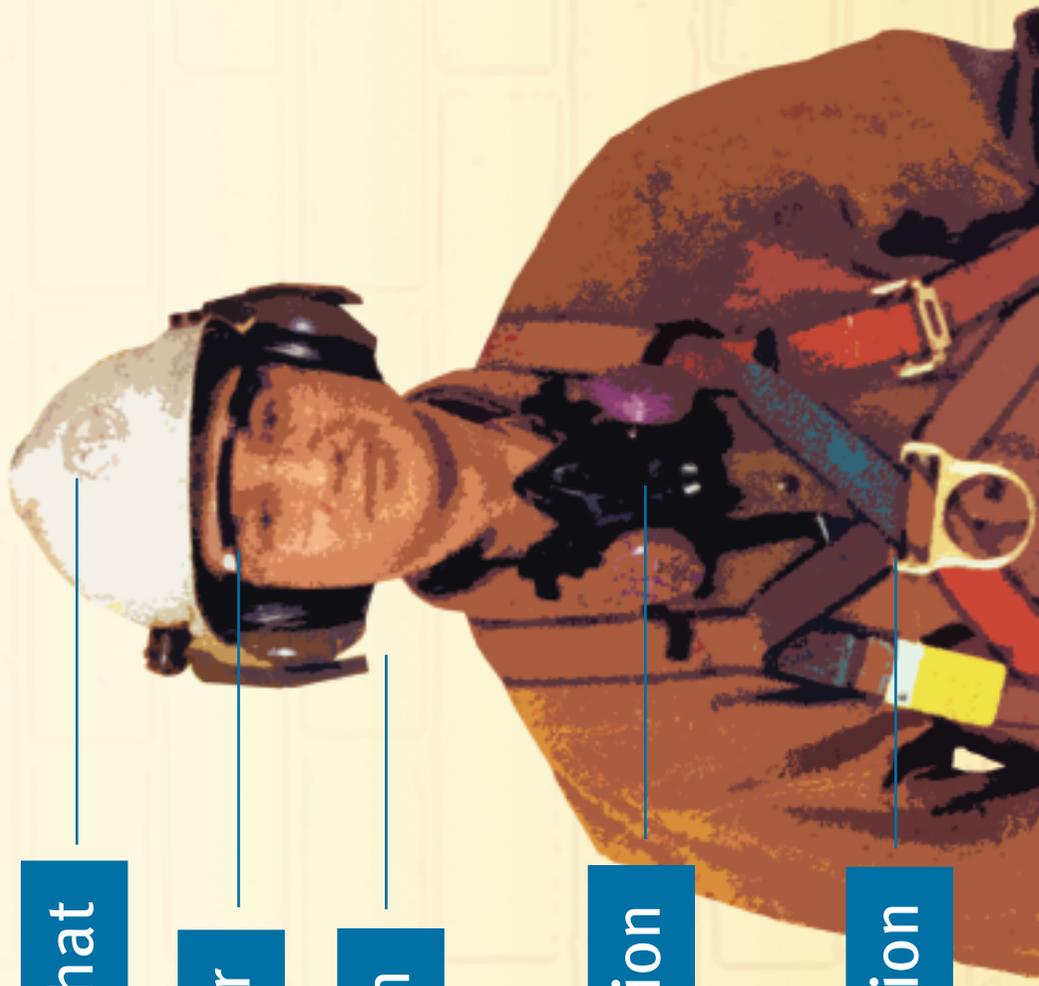
Hearing Protection



Respiratory Protection



Fall Protection





✓ Comfortable Work Clothes

✓ Protective Gloves

✓ Protective Work Boots

# The Unions and Their Contractors

## A **LIFETIME** Commitment to Safety and Training

# LYME DISEASE



**A**ny Laborer who works outdoors in New York state during spring and summer risks Lyme Disease from deer tick bites.

The Centers for Disease Control consider most of New York state at high risk for Lyme Disease — especially the Hudson Valley — with nearly 80,000 cases reported statewide from 1990 to 2007. That's more than any other state, and nearly twice as many as in Connecticut (second place in the number of infections) where it was first identified in 1975 at Old Lyme.

Construction tops the list kept by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of at-risk professions, above landscaping, forestry and brush-clearing.

When doctors on Long Island tested 396 building trades workers in 2002, they found that 43 (11 percent) had Lyme Disease. This rate of infection is twice as high as the rate for the population of Long Island overall. So, members of Local 186 working on the Ellensburg or Clinton wind turbine farms, or members of Local 17, 621 or 785 working on the Millennium Pipeline, to give just a few examples, could face twice as great a risk of Lyme Disease as Local 78 members working on Deutsche Bank in New York City.

Three of the 43 infected construction workers in the Long Island study needed six weeks of intravenous antibiotic treatment costing thousands of dollars. In other words, Lyme Disease is serious and expensive.

The initial symptoms include a bull-eye rash that appears three days to a month after a tick bite, plus flu-like symptoms such as fever, headaches and swollen lymph nodes. Untreated, Lyme Disease can cause heart irregularities, facial paralysis (called Bell's Palsy) and impairment of the nervous system.

That's a lot of trouble from a really small source. Although the characteristic bulls-eye rash may be large — from the size of a quarter up to 10 inches across — a deer tick is only about the size of a poppy seed or the head of a pin.

Fortunately, Lyme Disease is preventable — by blocking ticks from infecting us. A tick must be attached for 24 to 48 hours to cause the infection, which is bacterial. To block them, we can use barriers: clothing, and repellents.

## Clothing

1. Ticks are dark in color. So wear light-colored clothing to enable you to see them.
2. Wear long-sleeves shirts and long pants.
3. Ticks inhabit low brush and ground cover, and they first get picked up by feet or legs; then they climb up your body. Wear long pants and tuck your pants into your socks.
4. Check your clothing for ticks every two or three hours.
5. When you get home from the job site, throw your clothes into a hot dryer to kill ticks.

## Repellents

### For exposed skin:

1. Use repellent with 10- to 30-percent DEET (n,-diethylm-toluamide).
2. Don't apply directly. First spray or rub onto the hands and then transfer it to the face, arms and neck.
3. Avoid the eyes, mouth and nostrils.
4. Wash off the repellent from the skin when you get home from the job site.

### For clothing:

1. Use repellents with permethrin: Duranon, Permethrin Tick Repellent and Permanone are common brands.
2. Apply to pants, socks and shoes, but not to skin.
3. Permethrin products typically adhere to clothing through at least one wash cycle.

## Remove ticks quickly

1. Ticks may migrate over your body for 30 to 60 minutes before biting. They favor hairy areas, so check your chest, armpits and groin for ticks.
2. Don't burn ticks with matches or cover them with petroleum jelly. These simply don't work.
3. Don't use your bare hands.
4. Use tweezers — bent, needle-nose tweezers are best.
5. Grab the tick with the tweezers as close to the skin as possible.
6. Pull gently and firmly, and don't twist the tweezers as you pull the tick away.
7. Wash the bite area and your hands with soap and water, and apply an antiseptic to the bite area.