

Safe Supervisor

Practical, proven tips, ideas and techniques for managing a safer workplace ~ since 1929

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Managers Often Drop Ball on Employee Performance Issues

Have you ever had to fire an employee because of performance issues and later had doubts about how you handled the situation? If you are like many managers, you probably botched the entire process, according to Sharon Bar-David, a leadership trainer/consultant and motivational speaker.

“Behind every termination of an employee based on poor performance, you will usually find a manager who dropped the ball,” she says. “It’s easy enough to say that the employee didn’t perform, but the truth is that the manager’s own actions are often just as much to blame.”

Bar-David says many managers don’t address performance issues early enough and when they finally do, they mishandle the situation. “As a result, employees who could possibly have bounced back to acceptable performance become the unwitting casualties of managers who are not practicing responsible management.”

An employee’s performance may deteriorate for months or years before a manager intervenes. Bar-David says part of the reason for procrastination is that most managers want to be liked and aren’t comfortable being critical of a worker’s performance.

The longer the supervisor holds off having “the talk” with the worker, the worse the situation gets, she says. Prior to and during that discussion, the manager may feel anxious and stressed.

“It’s a tough conversation to have and one of the most hazardous mistakes one can make is to ignore the fact that the conversation is inevitably going to involve feelings—not only the employee’s feelings but also those of the manager,” she says. “It’s crucial to stop procrastinating and to deal honestly with your own apprehensions first.”

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Workplace Eye Injuries Alarming Common

March is Workplace Eye Safety and Health Month—an appropriate time to reflect on the fact that about 2,200 American and Canadian workers suffer eye injuries every day.

According to Prevent Blindness America, 10 to 20 percent of work-related eye injuries cause temporary or permanent vision loss.

The good news is that up to 90 percent of work-related eye injuries could be avoided if the right eye protection is used.

Common causes for eye injuries include:

- ✦ Flying objects, such as metal or glass bits
- ✦ Tools
- ✦ Particles
- ✦ Chemicals
- ✦ Harmful radiation

Prevent Blindness America recommends that supervisors/safety directors complete eye hazard assessments and then work to eliminate these hazards using machine guarding, work screens or other engineering controls. For additional protection, workers should also use appropriate safety eyewear, which includes non-prescription/prescription safety glasses, goggles, face shields, welding helmets and full-face respirators.

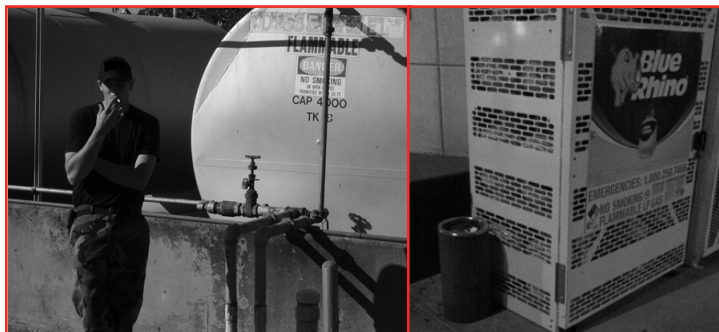
If hazards include the presence of particles, dust or flying objects, workers must, at a minimum, wear safety glasses with side shields. If chemicals are present, workers need to wear goggles and if employees are working near hazardous radiation sources (lasers, welding or fiber optics) they must wear special-purpose eyewear, such as face shields, goggles or helmets.

Supervisors must not only consider the possibility of eye injuries to employees whose jobs directly expose them to eye hazards, but also to workers from other areas, such as office staff, and customers or clients. ✦

NEWS you can USE ...

Some Sobering Facts About Electrocutions

With the impending arrival of warmer weather, many more people will be working outdoors on a variety of jobs that go into hibernation during the winter months.



Picture This!

Employees at a gas station in Arizona were told they needed to smoke 20 feet (six meters) away from the business's front door, so they dutifully complied. The only problem is that their smoking area was situated just inches away from flammable gas cylinders. Oops... (Naval Safety Center photo)

It's a good time to ponder some sobering statistics on electrocutions, which claim more than 400 lives each year in the US alone. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), electrocutions from wiring hazards, including damaged or exposed wiring at work or at home, account for about 20 percent of total electrocutions.

Ladders contacting power lines are responsible for about nine percent of electrocution fatalities, while incidents involving power tools account for a similar number of electrocutions.

But nearly half of the 400 electrocution deaths that occur in the US are related to consumer products, especially large appliances.

The National Safety Council estimates that electrical hazards are responsible for one workplace fatality every day.

In Canada during 2007 there were nine workplace-related electrocution fatalities and 472 known on-the-job injuries, according to the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada.

continued on page 3

PICK 6

Odds of winning the lottery **1 in 135,145,920** (multi-state, mega-millions jackpot)

More than **1** trillion text messages were sent in 2009 in the US alone (Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA)).

Nearly **20** percent of Canadian motorists admit to text messaging while driving, according to the Canadian Automobile Association.

An AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety poll found that **89** percent of respondents believe that sending text messages or emails while driving is a "very serious" threat to safety.

In an earlier study by the University of Utah researchers, it was determined that drivers engaging in cell phone conversations while moving in traffic processed as much as **50** percent less information within their driving environment than drivers who weren't engaging in cell phone conversations.

The Utah texting study found that drivers who chatted on cell phones while behind the wheel experienced a **9** percent worsening in their average reaction times.

People who attempted to text and drive at the same time had a **30** percent worsening in their average reaction times (University of Utah study).

Odds of crashing while writing a text message and driving at the same time:

6 times greater than if you were concentrating only on your driving.

Source: University of Utah study

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Editor – Dave Duncan
Managing Editor – Catherine Jones
Sales: 1-800-667-9300 • sales@bongarde.com
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continued from page 2

The ESFI says that the top electrical hazards include electrical systems that are more than 20 years old, misuse of surge suppressors, power strips and extension cords, contact with power lines and incidents involving major appliances. These hazards contribute to hundreds of deaths, both at work and at home, every year.

“Eliminating electrical hazards begins with education and awareness. A focus on electrical safety, both at home and in the workplace, can prevent the hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries and billions of dollars in economic losses that occur each year because of electrical hazards,” says ESFI. “Investing in ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs), circuit testers and where necessary, personal protective equipment (PPE) can significantly reduce risk.”

See page 11 for a Safety Talk on electrical safety.

Nine Percent of Workforce Absent with Seasonal or H1N1 Flu in November

Statistics Canada reports that 1.5 million employed Canadians ages 15 through 69 reported being absent from work as a result of H1N1 or seasonal influenza in November 2009.

That number represents nine percent of the Canadian workforce. On average, the absent workers each lost 19.6 hours of work, for a total of 29.5 million hours lost.

In November 2009, 10.5 percent of working women reported missing work because of H1N1 or seasonal flu, while 7.6 percent of working men did so.

The age group most affected was workers aged 30 to 44. In November, 11.8% of workers in this age group lost, on average, 18.8 hours each. Flu-related absenteeism was highest in Newfoundland and Labrador, where 14.2 percent of workers ages 15 to 69 reported lost work hours. The lowest rate, 7.6 percent, occurred in Quebec.

Arrest Made in Dangerous Prank Involving Train

When people have been drinking, some really questionable ideas make perfect sense. Such was the case in Edmonton in July 2009, when two men decided to steal an 11,000 kilogram paving machine, drive it across a farmer's field and park in on a busy rail line.

Not only did the men park the paver on the tracks, but they did so at a spot near an overpass where a busy highway runs below. The 85-car train slammed into the piece of heavy equipment at nearly 80 kilometers an hour, causing 13 cars to derail.

Amazingly, none of the derailed cars landed on the highway below and neither the train's engineer nor its conductor were seriously injured.

Acting on a tip from the public, Edmonton police have charged two 26-year-old men with mischief endangering life, mischief over \$5,000 and theft over \$5,000 nearly 18 months after the incident. One of the men has been arrested but the

other had not yet been found and is believed to have left the Edmonton area.

The incident caused more than \$1 million in damage. The man who was arrested told police he and the other man had been drinking that night, but has offered no motive for the act.

Terrorist Sentenced to Life in Prison for Failed Plot

A 24-year-old Toronto man who led a group plotting to bomb several Ontario buildings with a goal of killing as many people as possible, has been sentenced to life in prison.

Zakaria Amara and a group of other men had planned to ignite truck bombs at several locations, including the Toronto Stock Exchange, the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service and Canadian Forces Base Trenton.

Amara had been working to build detonators for the bombs, which were to be packed with shrapnel so as to inflict maximum carnage. Two other terrorists, Saad Gaya, 22, and Saad Khalid, also in his early 20s, were arrested in summer 2006 while unloading a truck which they believed contained three tones of explosive aluminum nitrate.

Gaya has been sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, while Khalid is serving a 14-year prison term.

The court was told that Amara, who has a wife and young daughter, developed extremist views over time and enjoyed watching violent jihadi videos. His motivation for the bombings was to force the Canadian government to pull troops out of Afghanistan.

Before being sentenced he told the court that he has since changed his extremist views and will work hard to repay his moral debt to Canadians.

Oilfield Company Must Pay \$375,000 Regarding Double Fatality

Alstar Oilfield Contractors Ltd. has been ordered to pay \$375,000 in connection with an explosion that killed two of its workers in Fox Creek, AB, in June 2006.

The workers had been welding a container shut when an explosion was triggered by a leaking propane cylinder inside the container.

The penalty includes a court order for \$250,000 to be paid to the Fox Creek Fire Department toward the purchase of equipment. Another \$60,000 will be paid to the Fox Creek School for workplace health and safety training and \$60,000 will go to NorQuest College for two memorial bursaries in the occupational health and safety portions of its business and industry careers program.

Alstar was also ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine and victim fine surcharge. Alberta's creative sentencing program allows judges to direct money from OHS Act convictions toward programs which support worker health and safety.

FOCUS ON: PALLET RACKING**Be Gentle With Pallet Racks**

Racks that hold thousands of pounds of materials on pallets in warehouses, stores and manufacturing plants may appear virtually indestructible, but they are certainly not immune to failure.

When these racks do fail, the results can be catastrophic for anyone working in the area as heavy shelving and materials rain down. One dramatic example of racking failure occurred recently in Russia, when a forklift operator unintentionally crashed a lift truck into racking supporting hundreds of cases of alcohol.

The racks failed, throwing \$150,000 worth of alcohol to the ground. Miraculously, the forklift operator survived.

Steel racks weakened by forklift strikes don't always fail immediately. They might not even appear damaged until they collapse without warning long after being damaged.

Such an incident killed a worker at a cold storage facility in Ontario. Several steel racks collapsed and part of the roof caved in, sending tons of frozen food and metal onto the worker.

An investigation found that a lift truck had earlier slammed into a freezer rack and that workers felt a significant vibration and heard a loud noise at the time. The racking subsequently collapsed.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) says employers, supervisors and workers who are responsible for and work around racking need to take every reasonable precaution to ensure the safe operation and maintenance of pallet racks.

CCOHS notes that even if a rack itself doesn't fail from being struck by a forklift, materials on the rack can become dislodged and fall, with serious results. Other potential causes of racking system collapses include:

- ✦ Improper design, installation or assembly,
- ✦ Overloaded or misused racks,
- ✦ Unstable floors or walls,

- ✦ Cracks in concrete floors around anchors (from repeated collisions with pallet racks),
- ✦ Products pushed through the back of a rack,
- ✦ Failure to install anchor bolts, and
- ✦ Lack of regular inspection and maintenance. This problem is compounded by the fact that forklift operators who unintentionally strike racks with the machines often don't tell their supervisors what they've done.

CCOHS recommends the following safe work practices where pallet racks are used:

Installation - Only workers who have received adequate training and are familiar with rack assembly procedures should be installing racking systems in accordance with health and safety guidelines, engineering reports and manufacturers' instructions.

Safety training - Anyone working in the area of pallet racking, or operating the equipment used to load the racks, must receive appropriate training on the potential hazards and safe work practices.

Maintenance - Racks are not designed to withstand harsh blows. Any structure that receives a major dent should be replaced or repaired.

Inspection - Supervisors and workers should conduct a daily inspection of the racking system. Things to look for are minor dents (a good indicator of structural abuse), improper overhang of goods over pallets, pallets over beams, damaged pallets, storage of improperly sized pallets, and unsafe operation of material handling equipment.

CCOHS also recommends conducting a more detailed monthly inspection of racking systems, in which findings such as structural damage and missing or out-of-position components are documented and promptly and properly addressed.

Saskatchewan Government Lays Charges in Potash Fatality

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice and Attorney General has cited five charges against Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan (PCAS) and supervisor Garth Gudnason in connection with the death of worker Robert Tkach in September 2008.

Tkach, a 61-year-old mine worker, was operating a vehicle underground when it flipped off the edge of a ramp, pinning him underneath.

The company is charged with failure of its supervisor to take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of a worker and failure to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all of its workers.

It is also charged with:

- ✦ failure to ensure that all work is sufficiently and competently supervised,
- ✦ failure to ensure that a supervisor complies with the OHS Act and regulations and

- ✦ failure to ensure that a direct supervisor record all significant information relevant to the health and safety of a worker.

Gudnason is charged with failure to take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of a worker, who may be affected by his acts or omissions.

The investigation into Tkach's death found that insufficient training coupled with failure to mark hazards and failure to have a seatbelt in the vehicle all played a role in his death.

The investigation found that two workers nearly suffered the same fate at the same location during the previous shift. One vehicle was left dangling over the edge of the ramp. They were able to reverse the vehicle to safety.

The maximum penalty for each of the charges is \$300,000, plus up to two years' imprisonment.

Lafarge Canada Inc. Fined Following Worker's Death

A Canadian manufacturer of construction material has been fined \$350,000, plus a 25 percent victim fine surcharge, after a worker was fatally crushed.

Lafarge Canada Inc. pleaded guilty to failing to take the reasonable precaution of ensuring that no worker was on the platform of a rig as it was being moved or adjusted.

On August 27, 2008, workers at Lafarge's cement plant in Ernestown, ON, were lining the inside of a kiln with new bricks. To install bricks on the ceiling of the kiln, the workers used a special rig composed of a work platform mounted on four legs with an overhead arch to hold up bricks.

As the workers advanced the rig along the sloping kiln floor, they had to adjust its legs to keep the work platform level. As the rig was being adjusted, its platform lurched forward. The workers who had been on the platform fell, as did the rig's arch. The arch, weighing more 400 kilograms, landed on one of the workers, killing him.

A Ministry of Labour investigation found that a manufacturer's sign on the rig prohibited workers from staying on the rig as it was being moved. The company did not have a written policy or clearly planned procedures for moving and adjusting the rig on the sloping floor of the kiln.

CN Rail Fined \$45,000 for Railway Safety Act Violation

CN Rail has been fined \$45,000 by Transport Canada for allowing a train carrying dangerous goods to depart a terminal and operate on main track without carrying a list of the dangerous cargo it was transporting.

Transport Canada charged CN for violating the Railway Safety Act. The company was warned three years ago after Transport Canada learned of several instances where trains weren't carrying the proper paperwork for dangerous goods they were transporting.

Company Fined For Malfunctioning Machine

An Ontario die-cast parts manufacturer has been fined after pleading guilty to failing to inform a worker about a continuing hazard involving a malfunctioning machine.

The worker suffered severe hand injuries after placing a die-casting machine into manual mode and reaching into it to reposition one of its components after it stopped working. The machine closed onto the worker's hand.

An Ontario Ministry of Labour investigation determined that had the machine been functioning properly, it would have stopped moving when the guard door was opened.

The company knew that the machine was malfunctioning and a couple of months before the incident a supervisor had

warned the worker that the machine could remain operational even with an open guard door. However, the worker mistakenly believed that the problem had been rectified by the company.

The Ontario Court of Justice imposed a \$55,000 fine, plus a 25 percent victim fine surcharge against ODC Manufacturing Ltd. of Barrie, ON.

Alberta Workplace Health and Safety Lists Top Five Worker Fatality Causes

Five leading causes of worker fatalities in Alberta account for nearly 70 percent of all work-related deaths.

Being struck by objects is the leading cause of worker deaths, accounting for about 20 percent of all workplace fatalities in Alberta, according to Alberta Workplace Health and Safety.

Other leading causes of workplace fatalities in the western province are as follows:

- **Falls:** Approximately 15 percent of worker fatalities in Alberta are fall-related.
- **Caught by objects:** About 12 percent of all workplace fatalities in Alberta involve workers being caught by objects such as rollers or moving machinery.
- **Transportation incidents:** These incidents, involving workers being struck by industrial equipment or other vehicles, claim nearly as many lives as incidents in which workers become caught by objects.
- **Exposures to harmful substances:** These incidents, covering everything from electricity to chemicals or gases, account for about 10 percent of worker fatalities in Alberta.

Public Servant Depression Rampant in Canada

A leading Canadian mental health expert says depression among public servants is Canada's biggest public health crisis.

Depression among nurses, teachers, police officers, military personnel and government workers at all levels has reached epidemic levels, according to Bill Wilkerson, founder of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health.

He told Canwest News Service that the public service is a "tsunami of distractions" including meetings, questioning of all decisions, delegation of duties, people being moved around and no one really being in charge.

"It's the most transient, fluid, unsettling work environment on the planet, so why wouldn't people be anxious and in distress?" he asks.

Mental health claims in the public service now account for 45 percent of all claims.

Know the Laws of Your Province

FALL PROTECTION PLANS

Here's what your jurisdiction's OHS law says about fall protection plans:



YUKON

Sec. 1.38 of the *OHS Regs.* requires: 1) a written fall protection plan to be in place and communicated to workers where work is performed at a location not protected by permanent guardrails and from which a fall of 7.5 m or more may occur; and 2) fall protection plan to adequately consider and describe a) fall hazards expected; b) fall protection systems to be used; c) procedures to assemble, maintain, inspect, use and disassemble the fall protection system; and d) rescue methods.



BRITISH COLUMBIA

Sec. 11.3 of the *OHS Reg.* requires: 1) employers to have a written fall protection plan if: a) work is being done at a location where workers aren't protected by guardrails and from which a fall of 7.5 m or more may occur; or b) section 11.2(5) applies (covers when use of fall arrest system isn't practicable or is hazardous); 2) fall protection plan to be available at the workplace before work with a risk of falling begins.



ALBERTA

Sec. 140 of the *OHS Code 2009* requires: 1) employers to develop fall protection plans for a work site if a worker may fall three metres or more and isn't protected by guardrails; 2) fall protection plan to specify: a) fall hazards; b) fall protection system to be used; c) anchors to be used; d) confirmation of clearance distances below the work area; e) procedures to assemble, maintain, inspect, use and disassemble the fall protection systems; and f) rescue procedures; 3) fall protection plan to be available at the work site and reviewed by workers before work with a risk of falling begins; and 4) employers to update the plan when conditions affecting fall protection change.



SASKATCHEWAN

Sec. 116.1(1) of the *OHS Regs.* requires: 1) employers or contractors to develop a written fall protection plan when a) worker may fall three metres or more; and b) workers aren't protected by a guardrail or similar barrier; 2) fall protection plan to specify a) fall hazards at the worksite; b) fall protection system to be used; c) procedures to assemble, maintain, inspect, use and disassemble the fall protection system; and d) rescue procedures; 3) fall protection plan to be readily available before work begins where a risk of falling exists; and 4) employers or contractors to ensure that workers are trained on the fall protection plan and the safe use of the fall protection system before allowing them to work in an area where a fall protection system must be used.



MANITOBA

OHS law doesn't specifically require a fall protection plan. However, Sec. 14.2 of the *Workplace Health & Safety Reg.* requires: 1) employers to develop and implement safe work procedures to prevent falls, train workers on these procedures and ensure that workers comply with them; 2) safe work procedures to identify fall hazards at the workplace and the measures that will be used to prevent falls; 3) when the use of a guardrail or fall protection system is required by law at a workplace, safe work procedures to address a) location of each guardrail or fall protection system; b) procedures to assemble, maintain, inspect, use and disassemble a fall protection system; and c) rescue procedures.



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

OHS law doesn't specifically require



ONTARIO

OHS law doesn't specifically require

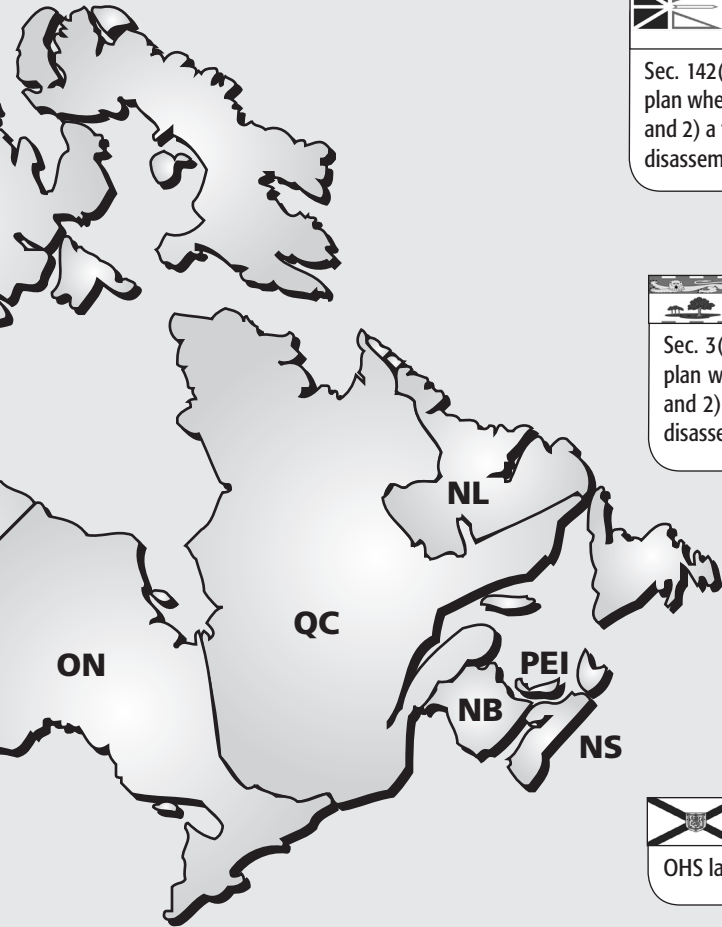


FEDERAL

OHS law doesn't specifically require fall protection plans.

THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES/INUNAVUT

require fall protection plans.



NEWFOUNDLAND/LABRADOR

Sec. 142(10) of the *OHS Regs. 2009* requires: 1) employers to have a written fall protection plan when they use a fall arrest system or personnel safety net as a means of fall protection; and 2) a fall protection plan to specify: a) procedures to assemble, maintain, inspect, use and disassemble the fall arrest system or personnel safety net; and b) rescue procedures.



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Sec. 3(11) of the *Fall Protection Regs.* requires: 1) employers to have a written fall protection plan when they use a fall arrest system or personnel safety net as a means of fall protection; and 2) a fall protection plan to specify: a) procedures to assemble, maintain, inspect, use and disassemble the fall arrest system or personnel safety net; and b) rescue procedures.



NEW BRUNSWICK

OHS law doesn't specifically require fall protection plans.



NOVA SCOTIA

OHS law doesn't specifically require fall protection plans.



QUÉBEC

OHS law doesn't specifically require fall protection plans.

require fall protection plans.

WORLD of SAFETY ...



ASSE Offers Workplace Violence Prevention Tips

In light of some disturbing statistics, the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) is urging employers to take action to reduce the incidence of workplace homicides.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), workplace suicide numbers across the US were 28 percent higher in 2008 than in 2007. Workplace homicides are among the top three causes of on-the-job fatalities.

In 2008 in the U.S., according to the BLS statistics, 251 people committed suicide at work, while 517 were shot and 32 were stabbed.

Transportation incidents are the number one cause of worker deaths, while being caught by objects or equipment

is the number three cause. Incidents of assault/violence are the second leading cause of worker fatalities.

ASSE member and certified safety professional JoAnn Sullivan, who co-authored a white paper on workplace violence, says employers need to realize that they have a general duty to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.

Employers are also responsible for the actions committed by workers within the scope of their employment, even if workers are not acting within company policy.

Workplace violence includes homicides, physical attacks, rapes and other assaults, along with all forms of harassment and

other acts that create a hostile work environment.

The ASSE's Risk Management and Insurance Practice Specialty urges employers to take the following steps to help prevent workplace violence:

- Officers and directors must establish a workplace violence prevention policy, while upper management must promote a clear anti-violence corporate policy and establish and maintain security policies.
- Human resource managers need to examine and improve hiring practices, implement background checks, encourage employees to report threats or violent behavior, establish termination policies and provide post-termination counseling.
- Safety, health and environmental departments need to train all employees in the warning signs of aggressive or violent behavior and train management in threat assessment and de-escalation techniques. They also need to conduct a formal workplace violence risk assessment, increase security as needed, develop and communicate a contingency plan, including crisis management and media relations, to all employees, review insurance coverage and verify coverage and exclusions, and identify a defensive strategy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Compact Fluorescent Lamps Pose Mercury Exposure Risk if Broken

When disposing of burned out "old school" light bulbs, most people weren't too concerned about whether they broke in the garbage bag. But the stakes have changed with the newer energy-saving compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs).

That's because CFLs contain toxic mercury, albeit in small amounts, that can be released if the bulbs break during disposal.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA's) Energy Star program recommends that these steps be taken in the event that a CFL or fluorescent tube breaks:

1. Open a window and keep people out of the room for at least 15 minutes.
2. Then use disposable rubber gloves and a piece of stiff paper or cardboard to pick up as many fragments of glass and powder as you can. Use sticky tape to pick up the smallest pieces and then wipe the area with a damp paper towel.

3. Double-bag (in plastic bags) all cleanup materials and seal the bags.
4. Wash your hands after handling the bags.
5. If the bulb breaks and fragments land in carpeting, all but the smallest particles should be gathered on stiff paper or cardboard before the area is vacuumed. Then dispose of the vacuum bag or empty and wipe out the canister if the vacuum is bag-less. Place the vacuum bag and other debris in a doubled plastic bag and then into the trash.

Within the past few years, many Chinese workers who work in plants that make CFLs have been poisoned by mercury exposure. Mercury can cause damage to the nervous system, respiratory system, digestive system and kidneys. High levels of exposure can cause death due to respiratory failure.

Drug Recall Linked to Wood Pallet Chemical

A voluntary North American recall of over-the-counter Tylenol products because of a musty odor has been linked to a chemical used to build wooden pallets.

McNeil Consumer Healthcare, the maker of Tylenol products, says the smell, which was associated with "temporary and non-serious gastrointestinal events" such as nausea, vomiting, stomach pain and diarrhea, was caused by the presence of trace amounts of a chemical called 2,4,6-tribromoanisole (TBA).

McNeil Consumer Healthcare says the smell was caused by a breakdown in TBA used in the pallets, adding, "The health effects of this chemical have not been well studied but no serious events have been documented in the medical literature."

Unqualified Operation of Excavator Kills Young Worker

The senseless death of a 23-year-old construction worker in England shows the importance of keeping untrained and unqualified workers away from heavy duty equipment.

The worker, who was operating a mini-excavator even though he was not qualified to do so, accidentally knocked a lever while leaning out of its cab window. The digging arm of the mini-digger moved upward, crushing the young man's head between the cab and the arm. He died at the scene.

Wales-based construction company Macob Administration Limited pleaded guilty in Gloucester Crown Court to charges of failing to ensure that all workers receive adequate training and failing to prevent hydraulic excavators from being started by unauthorized workers.

The company was fined the British equivalent of about \$134,000 CAD, along with being ordered to pay the equivalent of \$48,700 US (\$50,000 CAD) in court costs.

HSE inspector Martin Lee says the fatality highlights the extremely serious risks posed by equipment and vehicles on sites if workers lack adequate training.

The victim and other site workers were not all properly trained to use the equipment they were handling and vehicle keys were routinely left in the machines. As a result, the vehicles were accessible to anyone on site, regardless of their qualifications.

Info to go: Read more about the safe operation of vehicles at work by clicking on the Info to Go safety links at www.SafeSupervisor.com.

CAREER BOOSTER

Helping a Worker Overcome a Traumatic Experience

Editor's Note: Arny Alberts, (www.arnyalberts.com) author of *Burnt Cookies, a Quest for Closure, is a survivor of sexual abuse. His story details the difficult social scenarios that he experienced and his return to work. Alberts has offered Safe Supervisor his insights into how supervisors can help workers who have suffered traumatic experiences in their lives.*

Each person experiences, witnesses or hears about trauma in everyday life. Trauma typically results from shocking experiences such as a death in the family, a fire that destroys a home, a natural disaster or a serious injury in a traffic accident. But, trauma can also impact someone in a series of mental, physical or emotional experiences that occur over time. When these experiences are brought into the workplace, they are dealt with by employees in a variety of different ways. Just because you experience or witness trauma, it does not make you an expert in dealing with your co-workers' trauma. Here are some suggestions to follow:

- **Communicate** – If you know your co-worker has been through a traumatic experience, the only wrong decision to make here is not communicating when that person returns to the office. Communicate in a way that you can emotionally handle – but communicate. An affected individual will acknowledge the attempt even though his/her own emotions may inhibit any sustainable response. If you meet up with this person unexpectedly in the workplace, start a simple conversation about anything generic or non-specific. Let him/her know that you are approachable and listen carefully if that person decides to talk. If you can't communicate anything other than a simple smile at the time, do so.
- **Follow your heart** – No matter what form of communication you decide to choose, follow your heart as you proceed. Remember this individual is the same person you knew before his or her trauma was disclosed. Be honest and sincere. You may not be able to empathize, but listening and being yourself will help bring the person's life back to normal. If fear prevents you from taking action, imagine what this individual is going through each day since re-entering the workplace.
- **Find facts** – Search the Internet or library for information about the type of trauma your co-worker has endured. Gaining knowledge and understanding of what they went through, what they are currently going through and what could happen to them in the future will help to eliminate the fear of initiating communication.
- **Share an experience** – Relaying a similar traumatic experience with a co-worker will not relieve his or her problems. But it will provide some sense of hope for the future. When you show your human, vulnerable side, you send a clear message to people that they are not alone.
- **Listen, but don't try fixing** – During a situation when this person decides to open up and discuss some personal, traumatic experiences with you, just listen. Let the person talk and get any part of the story off his chest. This person is not looking for suggestions to cope with what happened or ideas to help him resolve any lingering issues. Traumatized people desperately need human contact; they want to trust someone and they are attempting to make an earnest connection with you.

Worker Killed at Kentucky Truck Plant

A Ford Motor Co. maintenance worker at a plant in Louisville, KY, recently became the first United Auto Worker (UAW) member to die in an incident at either of Ford's two Louisville factories since the mid-1970s.

Ronald Cassady, 54, was attempting to cut an I-beam with a torch when the beam fell onto his neck and head, severing an artery. He was pronounced dead upon arrival at hospital.

His partner, Rhonda Scott, told a reporter that just minutes before the beam fell, Cassady had called to wake her up for her own work shift. He had also left a note reading, "Wake up beautiful. Coffee pot is ready to go. Love, Ron."

He loved house boating and riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle. He had worked as a millwright for the plant for 17 years and was hoping to retire from that job.

Kentucky occupational health and safety inspectors are attempting to determine whether unsafe working conditions contributed to Cassady's death.

Tragedy Also a Miracle

No one could be expected to survive a 13-story fall from a collapsing scaffold and four workers didn't. However, one worker lived.

Five workers were on a swing stage, repairing balconies on a Toronto-area high rise building on Dec. 24, 2009, when the scaffold snapped in half.

Vladimir Korostin, 40, Fayzullo Fazilov, 31, Aleksey

Blumberg, 32, and Alexander Bondarev, 25, died in the 131-foot (40-meter) fall, but amazingly, the fifth worker, Dilshod Mamurov, 21, survived.

He suffered two fractured legs and a broken spine and was unconscious for many hours after falling. His miraculous survival may have been in part to the fact that he was hanging on to the scaffold from a lower elevation when he fell and he may also have landed on one of the victim's bodies, rather than directly on concrete.

Although the workers appeared to be wearing safety harnesses, the harnesses may not have been attached to anchor points.

Dock Supervisor Killed Days After Becoming Engaged

David Weiland, a dock supervisor at Norfolk International Terminals in Norfolk, VA, died just nine days after becoming engaged.

Weiland, 43, of Virginia Beach, VA, died after a machine used to move shipping containers struck a 105-foot (32-meter) tall light pole, causing it to fall onto and crush his subcompact car.

Other workers used a forklift to lift the pole off the car, and a co-worker and Virginia Port Authority (VPA) police attempted first aid, but Weiland died at the scene.

"He was a good person. He was the best," his sister, Lisa Lotz, told a reporter.

OSHA and VPA police are investigating.

SUPERVISORS IN COURT

Company Director Fined for Failing to Comply With Order

The director of a steel fabrication company in Ontario, Canada has been fined \$8,000 for failing to comply with a government safety inspector's order to stop using isocyanates. And the company he oversaw has been fined \$28,000.

An Ontario Ministry of Labour inspector visited Smith Steel & Fabrication Inc. in Atwood, ON, in September 2007. The inspector noticed that isocyanates were being used without completion of an assessment and without proper controls in place.

A stop use order was issued for the isocyanates. In May 2008, the inspector learned that the order wasn't being followed, prompting the charge.

Smith Steel & Fabrication Inc. pleaded guilty to failing to comply with the orders of an inspector, while the director, Leonard Eagle, pleaded guilty to failing to take all reasonable care to ensure that the corporation complied with such an order.

Both the company and Eagle must pay 25 percent victim fine surcharges on top of their fines. The surcharges go into a government fund to assist victims of crimes.

Supervisor Jailed in Crane Fatality

A lifting supervisor has been sentenced to four weeks' jail after one of his workers was killed in an incident involving a mobile crane in Singapore.

Ong Choon Wah instructed two workers to help with the lifting of a timber formwork using a mobile crane. When the crane lifted the load, a section of wire rope snapped and the formwork fell about 30 feet (nine meters), fatally striking one of the workers.

An investigation found that although Ong was a trained lifting supervisor, he had failed to ensure that the workers involved in the lift were trained riggers and that they were properly briefed on how to perform the lift.

Ong potentially faced a two-year prison term and a hefty fine, but Ho Siong Hin, Commissioner for Workplace Safety and Health, said the four-week jail term would hopefully make other supervisors take notice and ensure that workers were qualified for tasks they were instructed to perform.

10 ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR EVERY WORKER

Editor's Note: This is a new monthly feature in *Safe Supervisor*. Share this safety talk with your workers.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Workers in almost every work environment are exposed to electrical currents powerful enough to cause death by electrocution. Yet many workers are unaware of the potential hazards, which makes them even more vulnerable to the dangers.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

There are four main types of injuries that can result from electrical currents. These are:

1. Electrocution, which is fatal,
2. Electric shock,
3. Burns; and,
4. Falls, which may occur when a worker contacts electrical energy.

EXAMPLE

A Department of Public Works employee was attempting to read a water meter that was located behind a boiler. As the man tried to position himself between the water pipes and the boiler, he was electrocuted when his chest contacted exposed 120-volt terminals. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Electricity is always trying to find its way to the ground. When electricity flows, it takes the path of least resistance. Materials with a low resistance to electricity are known as conductors. Moisture is a good conductor of electrical current. Unfortunately, so is the human body.

When you touch a live electrical component, you can provide the electricity with an easy route to the ground. This is especially true if your hands are moist, or if you're touching something metal which is touching the ground, such as a metal ladder, another wire or plumbing.

When the electricity passes through your body, you receive an electrical shock. If you're extremely lucky it could be a mild shock. But sometimes even a small flow of electrical current can cause heart failure, brain damage or severe internal burns leading to death.

Here are 10 general safety tips for working with or near electricity.

1. Don't stand in wet areas when using electrical tools.
2. Inspect cords for damage or wear prior to each use.
3. Unplug machinery, power tools and appliances before cleaning, inspecting, repairing or removing something from them.
4. When unplugging a cord from an outlet, pull on the plug, not the cord. Pulling on the cord causes wear and may lead to a shock.
5. If outlets or switches feel unusually warm, don't use them and get a qualified electrician to check the wiring.
6. Plug power tools into grounded outlets installed with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs).
7. If it's necessary to affix cords to a wall or floor, use tape. Nails and staples can damage cords and cause fire and shock hazards.
8. Don't tie power cords in a knot, as knots can cause short circuits and shocks. Instead, loop the cords or use a twist lock plug.
9. When working outdoors, watch for overhead power lines and buried power line indicators. Always assume overhead power lines are energized and stay at least 10 feet (3 meters) away from them.
10. Use "C" rated extinguishers for electrical fires. Never use water.

FINAL WORD

Electrical currents are a widespread occupational hazard to which almost everyone is exposed. No matter what your job, electrical safety work practices are essential.

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Managers Often Drop Ball on Employee Performance Issues

The manager needs to expect and prepare for the employee to respond with silence, crying, anger, attacking, blaming, defensiveness, bitterness or denial. "Supervisors who aren't prepared for those responses won't be able to deal with the situation effectively."

Bar-David says the following seven-step method can help managers navigate performance issue conversations in a supportive, firm and fair manner:

- 1. Refer to good past performance:** Begin the meeting by expressing appreciation for the things the employee has done well in the past. Keep it brief and don't make things sound better than they really are.
- 2. Calmly relay your observations:** Describe the specifics of the performance problems, focusing on concrete observations rather than unqualified 'diagnosis.' For example, don't say, "You've been defensive." Instead, say, "When Mary inquired about a late report, you yelled at her."
- 3. Review expectations:** Refer to the expected standards of conduct so that the employee is clear about how his/her performance falls short of what's required. For example, say, "The expectation within our organization is that employees demonstrate respect toward customers, even when provoked."
- 4. Express concern for the employee's well-being and future:** A short, "I'm concerned about you and want to make

sure that, together, we can get things back on track" will go a long way.

- 5. Open a dialogue:** Ask the employee for his/her perspective on the performance issues to help pave the way for a workable plan for action to address the problem(s). Expect that the employee may become emotional, defensive or angry. Keep your reactions in check.
- 6. Take action:** Set crystal clear expectations, arrive at a mutually understood plan, define precise accountabilities for the employee and yourself, work out methods and deadlines for monitoring progress and spell out the consequences if performance doesn't improve. Set a date for the next meeting and tell the worker you are confident in his or her ability to improve.
- 7. Don't drop the ball on following through:** Continue to meet with the employee to discuss his or her progress in improving work performance. Keep careful notes on progress, or lack of it, and your conversations with the worker. If solid improvements aren't evident, a formal progressive disciplinary process may be your only option.

Sharon Bar-David lives in Toronto. Visit her website at www.sharonbardavid.com 



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