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UTAH LABOR COMMISSION

UTAH OSHA SAFETY LINE NEWSLETTER

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EYE PROTECTION IN HOT WEATHER

As the temperatures rise in Utah, more workers are working outside which brings new hazards that employers must eliminate. Before your employees start working in high temperatures, help them become acclimated to the higher temperatures by exposing them to higher temperatures a little at a time. Remember rest, shade, and water is vital for your employee's safety. For more information on heat illness and its prevention can be found on OSHA's website: http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html#prevent

One area that is often overlooked when dealing with higher temperatures is eye protection. Nearly one million Americans have lost some degree of their sight due to an eye injury. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 37% of all head injuries involving days away from work in 2008 involved eye injuries, and 62% of all face injuries involved injuries to the eyes. Each year over 700,000 workers suffer some type of eye injury. In 2008, there were 27,450 nonfatal occupational injuries or illnesses involving the eye (or eyes) that resulted in days away from work. 81% of these eye injuries were to male employees. The most common injuries were from the eye being rubbed or abraded by foreign matter, such as metal chips, dirt particles and splinters, or by these types of items striking the eye. It only takes a second for this type of an eye injury to occur.

Recent studies have shown that one of the most common reasons for employee's non-compliance with eye protection requirements is fogged lenses. These studies looked at all types of eye protection, including: welding lenses, laser protection lenses, full face respirators, and chemical resistant goggles. When an employee is wearing safety glasses in high temperatures fog becomes a hazard that affects all areas of the country. Even in drier than dry Phoenix, employees perspire more in heat than they do at other times of the year. This human component of perspiration increases the moisture between the face and the safety glasses, which increases the possibility of fogging. Employees that are required to wear full-face and full-body gear are especially vulnerable to fogged lenses. When employees have fogged safety glasses the natural reaction is to take them off and wipe them dry. Just this momentary time without eye protection raises the possibility of eye injuries in the workplace. The hot-weather injury risk of fogged up safety glasses is a reality. Because of this reality it is im-

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portant to include fog prevention as part of your safety policy and culture.

Anti-fog products are available but not every product may be suitable for the type of safety glasses your employees are wearing. Composition of the lenses (glass, plastic, and polycarbonate) may have a direct effect on the anti-fog agent. To ensure you are using the most effective product, do a quick test in your break room. Apply the anti-fog agent on one lens and leave the other lens untreated. Hold the safety glasses over a pot of boiling water (using a pair of tongs will keep your hands clear of the steam) and see if the lens that was treated remains fog free. Also, put the pair of safety glasses in your freezer, for about 5-10 minutes, then take them out and blow onto the lenses, once again, did the anti-fog product do its job? If not, a different product or lens type should be investigated.

Fog isn't the only cause for non-compliance with eye protection requirements; other factors like comfort, management example, and employee involvement can increase compliance. Do your employees complain that the glasses slide down their nose, or the side pieces get sweaty and slippery? Consider a strap, or a different model to alleviate this problem. Are there areas of your workplace where eye protection is required, but other areas are not? Consider requiring your entire operation wear eye protection, especially where these areas are in close proximity. Other ideas: Use your most experienced employees to help you monitor eye protection compliance. Make sure that your management/supervisory staff wear their eye-protection when in required areas.

Compliance Corner

Question: I work in a photo lab and I've just been promoted to the head photo specialist position. I need my team to know how important not having food back in the lab is. Can you tell me what happens when a lab doesn't comply with your set of rules? How often would our photo lab be inspected, and if a violation was found would there be a fine?

Answer: Yes. OSHA's Sanitation standard governing eating and drinking areas, 29 CFR 1910.141 (g)(2) states, "No employee shall be allowed to consume food or beverages...in any area exposed to a toxic material." The term toxic material is defined under 29 CFR 1910.141(a)(2) meaning: a material in concentration or amount...which is of such toxicity so as to constitute a recognized hazard that is causing or is likely to cause death or serious physical harm. So, if the materials are toxic as defined above and could be consumed in a amounts capable of serious physical harm or death, they cannot be in an area where employees eat or drink.

As for the rest of your question, a photo lab would not be considered a high hazard industry, and therefore would be a lower priority for planned inspections. However, OSHA also moves quickly on employee complaints or serious accidents. There are penalties involved with serious violations, ranging from $7000.00 to $250.00 per violation.

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Methylene Chloride Safety in Home Remodeling

Methylene Chloride (also called Dichloromethane) is a colorless, volatile, liquid with a sweet odor. It is used for paint stripping, furniture stripping, vapor degreasing, and refinishing bathtubs. Home remodeling can include any of the previously mentioned uses, which can expose yourself, or your employees to this harmful chemical.

In February 2012, a worker using a product containing methylene chloride to refinish a bathtub was found dead, slumped over a bathtub in an unventilated bathroom. In September 2011, a worker using a product containing methylene chloride to strip the glaze from a bathtub collapsed in the bathtub and later died. OSHA and NIOSH have identified at least fourteen workers deaths since 2000 related to bathtub refinishing with stripping agents containing methylene chloride. One reason for the amount of deaths associated with Methylene Chloride in bathtub refinishing is the fact that workers often spray or pour a product into the bathtub and then brush the product onto the tub surface. Because bathrooms tend to be small and have poor ventilation the vapors quickly rise to levels over the allowable limit. According to OSHA, the legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is 25 ppm averaged over an eight-hour workshift, and employees cannot be exposed to more than 125 ppm during any fifteen-minute work period. The odor threshold is 300 ppm, so once a worker can smell methylene chloride it is too late, they are already over exposed. Methylene Chloride can also cause severe irritation and burning to the skin and eyes, with possible eye damage. Inhaling Methylene Chloride can irritate the nose throat and lungs. Higher exposures can cause headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, and unconsciousness. Methylene Chloride exposure can damage the liver, and affect the kidneys, and brain. Ventilation, respirators, eye protection, methylene chloride-resistant clothing, and gloves can limit the exposure to your employees. When choosing gloves, only polyethylene (PE) or ethylene vinyl alcohol (EVOH) gloves are resistant to methylene chloride. PE/EVOH gloves do not provide good physical resistance against tears, so an outer glove made from nitrile or neoprene should be worn. Choosing a solvent that does not contain Methylene Chloride is the best way of eliminating exposure to your employees. Remember, other workers in the area of the tub refinishing are also at risk of over exposure. Make sure your ventilation does not affect other workers in other areas, and that the area of ventilation does not confine the Methylene Chloride to one area.

Utah OSHA Private Sector Consultation is available to assist small employers to identify Methylene Chloride hazards in your workplace, at no cost. For assistance please call Utah OSHA Consultation at 801-530-6855.

For additional information on Methylene Chloride please go to http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/methylenechloride/