

Safety Cornerstones

Provided By: Smith Buckley & Hunt Insurance Agency, Inc
A Newsletter of Practical Compliance and Safety Tips

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OSHA Encourages Preventing Distracted Driving

A new education campaign by OSHA encourages employers to prevent work-related distracted driving, with a focus on texting while driving.



BLS Releases New Illness and Injury Data

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has released the most recent data regarding workplace illnesses and injuries.



OSHA Evaluates Permissible Exposure Limits

Assistant Secretary David Michaels discusses OSHA's efforts to compile a list of chemicals on which the agency will focus its efforts.



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OSHA Makes Efforts to Prevent Distracted Driving Deaths

Distracted driving, and especially driving while using hand-held devices, can present a serious and potentially deadly danger. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. And since the leading cause of worker fatalities is motor vehicle crashes, texting while driving presents a major emerging workplace hazard.

Education Campaign

In an effort to combat worker fatalities in motor vehicle crashes, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced an education campaign calling on employers to prevent work-related distracted driving with a focus on prohibiting texting while driving.

Communication Efforts

OSHA's education outreach includes a new webpage designed for workers whose workplaces are cars, vans and trucks, as well as their employers. It informs workers of their rights and employers of their responsibility to

provide safe workplaces, which includes offering best practices and company policies on achieving safe workplaces in motor vehicles. More information and updates are available at www.osha.gov/distracted-driving.

Request to Employers

In an open letter to employers, OSHA requests that employers evaluate their policies and practices to best protect workers from the danger of distracted driving. The letter reminds employers of their legal obligation to prohibit dangerous workplace practices, including texting while driving. It also asks them to remove incentives that might motivate employees to text behind the wheel.

OSHA's Stance

"It is your responsibility and legal obligation to have a clear, unequivocal and enforced policy against texting while driving," Dr. David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor, reminded employers. "Companies are in violation of the Occupational Safety and Health Act if, by policy or practice, they require texting while driving, or create incentives that encourage or condone it, or

they structure work so that texting is a practical necessity for workers to carry out their jobs. OSHA will investigate worker complaints and employers who violate the law will be subject to citations and penalties."

State Laws

Texting while driving has become a prominent hazard, receiving attention from lawmakers in most states. In fact, 30 states now ban text messaging for all drivers, and President Barack Obama signed an executive order prohibiting texting while driving for federal employees.

OSHA's Role

Employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees – and this includes prohibiting hazardous behavior like texting while driving. OSHA's role is to ensure these safe conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and providing training, education and assistance.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Releases Most Recent Workplace Illness and Injury Data

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) published key findings from the 2009 Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, revealing several important trends. Most notably, and partially because of the reduced number of workers and hours worked in 2009, the number of cases of injuries and illnesses combined among private industry establishments declined significantly in 2009 for all case types. The manufacturing industry sector reported the largest year-to-year decline in injuries and illnesses since the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) was introduced in 2003.

The total recordable case injury and illness incidence rate was highest in 2009 among mid-size private industry establishments, those employing between 50 and 249 workers, and lowest among small establishments, those employing fewer than 11 workers.

Despite the total decrease in incidence rate, certain occupations in the private sector, including delivery service truck drivers, landscapers and groundskeepers, restaurant cooks and registered nurses, had increases in their rates. Contact with objects or equipment was a frequent hazard resulting in an occupational injury or illness and accounted for 24 percent of all cases.

The number of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) cases, often referred to as ergonomic injuries, declined by 9 percent but represented the same proportion of all cases as in the previous year.



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Outdated permissible exposure limits to be updated

According to OSHA Assistant Secretary David Michaels, the agency plans to address the outdated workplace chemical permissible exposure limits. Michaels revealed these plans at a recent panel discussion at the American Public Health Association's annual meeting.

Most of these limits were adopted at the time of the OSHA's creation and have remained unchanged even though health data indicate that many chemicals pose hazards to workers at levels below these limits. OSHA received more than 130 nominations on the top chemicals of concern from a web forum held in August. These, combined with input from the OSHA field and other preliminary information, will help OSHA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to categorize chemicals in a draft list according to their toxic characteristics and produce a final list of chemicals on which the agency will focus its efforts.

OSHA fines manufacturer more than \$270k for worker exposure to hazards

OSHA cited Interstate Brands Corporation, which manufactures bakery products, with 20 safety violations and fined the company \$270,500 after inspectors found that workers were being willfully exposed to potentially fatal injuries from unsafe machinery and other hazards on two separate occasions. Responding to worker complaints, OSHA inspectors found inadequately maintained forklifts being operated by workers in unsafe passages and aisles as well as improperly guarded machinery that failed to prevent workers' clothing or limbs from being caught in moving parts during operation.

Worker loses life on tractor without seat belt

On Oct. 18, 2010, a worker operating a front-end loader with a backhoe attachment lost control on a 40- to 60-degree slope, causing the tractor to flip onto its left side and fatally pin the worker under the cab's roof area. No seat belt was found on the tractor. Tractor overturns account for more farm work deaths than other accident types, and side overturns are more likely when the tractor is operated too close to ditches, embankments and ponds; on too steep a slope; or too fast for road or field conditions such as curves, sharp turns or field depressions. [OSHA regulations](#) require that seats belts be provided on most material handling equipment.

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