OSEC gets a facelift! Actually, the OSEC intranet website has been given a new look. It’s recently completed migration over to Microsoft SharePoint has improved the site’s overall aesthetics and functionality.

The improved usability has made it easier than ever to get important information for Safety Coordinators, Safety Committee Members, Supervisors and Managers, and County Employees alike. The website is an important resource for County workers and aids in OSEC’s mission to protect County employees and the public we serve.

The site contains a variety of information and resources on occupational safety and environmental health and safety matters such as how to report hazards, what to do in an emergency, and upcoming training events.

Visit the site and you will find information on the Annual Safety Seminar and other upcoming training opportunities. Another example is with Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP) training. This type of training is required for jobs that have a reasonably foreseeable exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.

While BBP is not exactly training for everyone, but you can also find something that is, ergonomics for example. Do you ever want help with adjusting your desk or want to know how to get an ergonomic evaluation of your workstation? Did you know, OSEC manages the County’s proactive ergonomic program designed to improve and promote ergonomic practices in the County. Ergo Fit, PRN, and VSI Ergonomics are three of the vendors that OSEC contracts with for these services.

What if your building has leaked after a big storm? OSEC also manages the contract for this type of emergency service within the sanitation and remediation contract with Anderson Group International (AGI). There is also a list of pre-qualified vendors that can provide non-emergency clean-up services.

For more information visit www.osec. Check it out!

“The Ergonomic Age:” Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones

Ergonomics is the study of people and their environment—it’s a science that is quickly growing and evolving. Only twenty years ago, few people ever heard of ergonomics, but as technology was introduced into the workplace and at home, we began to see new types of injuries known as Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI).

Much of today’s ergonomics has focused on the way employees sit and work behind computer terminals, but actually, ergonomics applies to much more than office work. Ergonomics is important in everything we do from physical labor to the things we do at home like gardening, chores, and our physical activities. Its impact can have a major effect on our overall health and can improve our efficiency.

However, as technology has changed so has ergonomics. The use of laptops, tablets, and smartphones, and other mobile computer devices have created new chal-
Safety Briefs by Tyler Nguyen

It’s Cal/OSHA Form 300A Posting Time

It’s February, meaning it’s time for the three-month period during which all California employers must post their summaries of workplace-related injuries and illnesses for the previous year. From Feb. 1 through April 30, County departments are required to post Cal/OSHA Form 300A in a conspicuous place.

Form 300A information comes from Cal/OSHA Log 300, which details workplace-related incidents. The summary includes information on types of injuries and illnesses that occurred, and their extent and outcome. It is intended to alert workers to possible hazards, and includes average number of employees at the workplace and hours used to calculate injury and illness rates.

This requirement applies to employers with 11 or more workers, excluding low-hazard establishments in the retail, services, finance and real estate sectors.

County departments that experienced no workplace injuries or illnesses in calendar year 2012 should post the form with zeroes across the total lines.

Departments also must mail or otherwise provide an annual summary to employees who do not report at least weekly to a location where the summary is posted.

One question that gets asked every year is “Who signs the 300A?” The answer is that the highest ranking company executive officer for the work site should review and sign the form. In the County, that would be either an Agency Head or a Department Head.

Changes at Cal/OSHA

Ellen Widess is the current Cal/OSHA Chief appointed by Governor Jerry Brown. The previous Cal/OSHA Chief, Len Welsh, is now Chief of Workplace Safety for California State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF), the state major workers’ compensation insurance carrier.

According to the Cal-OSHA Reporter December 7, 2012 edition, Ellen Widess is one of the select few who are considered Most Influential People in California Occupational Safety and Health.

In a speech given to members of the American Society of Safety Engineers in 2012, Widess said that one of her administration’s initiatives is to focus on occupational health in the workplace, evident by the importance of the newly implemented Aerosol Transmissible Disease standard (General Industry Safety Order 5199) already in force.

Are You Reading Chemical Labels?

Everyone knows what chemicals are, right? Well, you might be surprised to find out some of the things that are actually considered chemicals or hazardous substances.

Any substance with the words Danger, Caution or Warning on it is a good indication that it’s probably considered a chemical or hazardous substance. Always read the label on any chemical before using any product that may contain a hazardous substance. The label will state any dangers to you and others.

All products containing hazardous substances are required by law to include certain safety information on the label. This information is there to protect you and is why you cannot use unlabelled secondary containers for chemicals. Before using some chemicals you may also need to refer to the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) to find out more information. If this is needed check with your Supervisor or Safety Coordinator before using it. It is part of your job to understand and follow the labels of any chemical.

One such label requirement are control measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE includes safety glasses, neoprene gloves, or respirators, much more. The label will inform your what PPE you should wear and if it’s on the label it’s the law. Improper or lack of PPE can result in citations and serious injury—even if you’re only going to use small amounts of a chemical. Always wear the exact PPE stated. For example, do not substitute safety glasses for goggles because they offer less protection.

When using a chemical always check the label for brand and chemical name and you should also check for:

- Signal words–Danger for substances that are highly flammable or corrosive, Poison for those that are highly toxic, Caution or Warning for other types of hazards

Instructions for safe handling and use

- Description of the principal hazards of the product and how to avoid them like by using proper ventilation or proper PPE
- First-aid information if present on the label before you actually need it
- Special Instruction such as reactivity, volatility, compatibility

If you are unsure about the chemical you’re using or have questions, never hesitate to seek assistance of a supervisor rather than failing to know. Don’t put yourself, your co-workers and others at risk.
Winter Slips, Trips and Falls—

Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common causes of injury on the job and at home. Everyone slips, trips, or falls on occasion. We tend to shrug off these accidents as just clumsy moments. But sometimes, they can result in serious, painful—and even deadly—injuries. Slips, trips, and falls are usually minor and don’t result in permanent injury. But sometimes these accidents are serious, even permanently disabling. Injuries can occur whether you fall from a height, like from a ladder, or just slip or trip at ground level.

Winter weather can add to your woes and increase the risk of slips, trips, and falls. Preventing slips and falls is a major concern for everyone when outdoor surfaces are wet or icy, and slippery under foot. Here are some suggestions to help your employees prevent falls and the possible injuries:

- Wear appropriate footwear with nonslip soles on wet, icy, or snowy days.
- Look where you’re going when walking or working outdoors. People often walk with cell phones and get so involved in their conversations that they forget to look where they’re going and trip and fall. Be sure to watch for uneven surfaces or wet and icy floors.
- Take extra care when walking on wet, icy, or snow-covered walkways. Walk slowly and slide your feet on slippery surfaces. Avoid turning sharply when you walk on a slippery surface.
- Hold onto the railing when using outdoor stairways.
- Be especially careful when carrying packages, equipment, materials, etc.
- Wipe your feet when entering a building so that your wet soles won’t cause you to slip on indoor flooring.
- If you slip and start to fall, limit your injuries by bending your elbows and knees and using your legs and arms to absorb the fall. Or roll into the fall, if that’s more appropriate.

Infection Control: It’s In Your Hands!

It is that time of year again where “something is going around”.... People are getting sick! You hear about someone coming to work ill and now everyone has it. What can you do to prevent the spread of colds and flu at work? For starters, don’t go to work sick! You aren’t doing anyone a favor. But sometimes people don’t even know they are sick yet! According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Symptoms start 1 to 4 days after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on your illness to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. So, prevention is key.

Here are a few tips for staying healthy at work:

* Frequently wash your hands for 15-20 seconds or use degermer (after touching other people’s hands, coffee pot handle, copy machine buttons, elevator buttons, shared telephones or computers, refrigerator/microwave handles or anything else that may have been contaminated with other people’s germs).
* Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes.
* Wipe down surfaces that are shared like phones, desk/counter tops, door knobs, handles and keyboards with a sanitizing wipe.
* Drink plenty of fluids, eat right, get fresh air, exercise and don’t stress. All of these things will help your immune system keep you healthy.
* If you do cough or sneeze do it into a tissue, throw it away and wash your hands. If you don’t have a tissue handy, cough into your elbow instead of your hand to help reduce the spread of germs.

If you do happen to get sick, don’t worry! All symptoms usually go away within 2 weeks. You can try over the counter medicines for your symptoms, drink lots of fluids including tea with honey and lemon, get plenty of rest and wash your hands!!!! Don’t let that cold you picked up spread at work or at home! For more information check out the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.
Mission Statement

OSEC's mission is to develop policies and to oversee the environmental health and safety programs applicable to the operations of the County of Santa Clara. OSEC assists in the training of County employees, the development of programs, and the impartial investigation of issues. OSEC evaluates and responds to the diverse needs of all agencies/departments and monitors activities to protect County employees and the public we serve.

---

Continued from page 1, “The Ergonomics Age:” Laptops, Tablets, Smartphones

as the age of technology continues to expand so will “The Ergonomics Age.”

Laptops

Laptops are good for mobile computing needs and should be arranged much like a traditional desktop if used at home or other permanent setup. Chair configuration and keyboard/screen height need to be considered. A docking station should be used to make the setup more closely resemble a desktop workstation. Options include attaching external keyboards (an adjustable keyboard tray or desk), a mouse, and even a full-size monitor.

Unfortunately, as that is not always possible after all laptops are designed for mobile use. Laptop users need to think about their position when using them in temporary environments such as at a hotel, in a coffee shop, or on your bed at home. When using a laptop, users should be sitting in a chair that allows for an upright or slightly reclined posture. They should center the laptop in front of them and keep their arms and elbows relaxed and close to their body with elbows bent at about 90 degrees. A possible solution for those on the move is using an empty 2- to 3-inch binder with the wider edge toward their knees to create an angle that will help keep their wrists straight and increase the height of the screen. Padded laptop trays are also a good option and may reduce contact stress and heat irritation caused by the laptop.

Every computer user should incorporate mini breaks and that’s especially important for laptop users. Take a mini break every 20 to 30 minutes to break up repetition and change your posture.

Tablets

While much tablet use is personal, there is a growing business use. The heavy use of tablets creates real ergonomic challenges for users and employers. Many people experience neck and shoulder issues associated with their use. There is no fix unless you attach an external keyboard and mouse and set it up like a desktop. Short of that, it’s important to limit your duration. Also, keep moving and changing your postures every few minutes; use cases that let the device remain propped on a table at about a 60- to 70-degree angle to reduce neck strain; set the font size larger to improve posture; and don’t hold the device for long periods to reduce hand, arm, and shoulder discomfort.

Smartphones

As phones can do more, workers are increasingly spending more time using them. Technology has also advanced to the point, that smartphones have essentially become like mini-computers. An example of this is the latest smartphone-tablet hybrid known as a “phablet.” Their increased use can cause all sorts of RSI’s to the neck, back, wrists, and shoulders. The best way to improve your smartphone ergonomics is to limit their use. In addition, smartphone users should draft briefer messages, use word recognition tools to reduce keystrokes, keep the wrist relatively straight, and avoid twisting wrists into odd angles.