Injury and Illness Prevention Program

California requires every employer in the state to create a safe and healthful workplace. Despite this requirement, over 390 workers died in 2011 as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That’s a 20 percent increase from the year before. For the past several years, fatalities were trending downward, but have spiked in the most recent year that we have available data for.

Perhaps, some of this can be attributed to a decrease in the unemployment rate—since there are more people working. Whatever the reason, workplace safety is sometimes taken for granted or overlooked due to complacency. You really can’t ever let your guard down because accidents can happen in a blink of an eye as evidenced in 2011.

Even with these tragedies, California has always strived to be ahead of the curve. One example is by requiring all employers, regardless of size, to maintain an effective and written Injury and Illness Prevention Program known as the IIPP. This is one of the main tools used to help keep workers safe. Although this requirement has been in place for decades in California, it’s not required nationally. That is on the cusp of changing with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), trying to put a similar IIPP regulation into federal law. The federal Injury and Illness Prevention Program, referred to as I2P2, is expected to become law sometime this year.

For California this isn’t new, but does serve as a reminder for us to focus on safety and revisit our IIPP. The County’s IIPP is maintained by OSEC and is available on our website. Employees are encouraged to visit the site and find out more about the County’s plan to keep workers safe on-the-job.

High risk departments go a little further and create customized versions to help them better manage their safety needs. To find out if your department has a custom IIPP, ask your Supervisor or Department Safety Coordinator.

New employees are also given an introduction to it at their orientation, but we...
An astounding 2,000-plus eye injuries occur on the job every day, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and almost 100,000 incidents lead to temporary or permanent vision loss.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is an important last layer of protection for employees, but what happens after an eye injury or exposure. After all, PPE can be defeated if employees forget to use eye protection, use the wrong kind, or use it improperly.

Your best chance of avoiding or reducing permanent eye damage after an exposure is by immediately flushing your eyes with water for at least 15 minutes. Many experts today are more commonly suggesting flushing your eyes for up to 20 minutes.

Eyewashes and showers must be provided in areas where employees have an exposure to a harmful eye substance as a regular part of their work or in a “foreseeable emergency”. The sooner you begin to flush the better. That’s why Cal/OSHA also requires eyewashes and showers to be located no more than ten seconds away from the hazard.

Location of an eyewash or shower is very importance and should be carefully evaluated. Accessibility is very important especially when considering that in an emergency, an employee may literally be walking blindly to access the eyewash.

Eyewash and shower maintenance is also critical to ensure they function properly during and emergency. Monthly tests and inspections are required and should be documented in some way. The last thing anyone would want is to find out your eyewash station needs maintenance in an emergency situation.

For more information or compliance assistance access the Cal/OSHA website or contact OSEC.

Bloodborne Pathogens

The Occupational Safety and Environmental Compliance Department is offering Bloodborne Pathogen Training for County employees at the Charcot Training Center this spring.

According to OSHA, bloodborne pathogens means pathogenic microorganisms that are present in human blood and can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Any person who encounters blood at work must take universal precautions to avoid exposure to such pathogens. Universal Precautions is an approach to infection control. According to the concept of universal precautions, all human blood and certain human body fluids are treated as if known to be infectious. This is why proper training is important.

This annually required training is for employees that have an occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials as defined by Cal/OSHA. However, everyone should know about the hazards associated with blood and other human bodily fluids.

Many County employees who work in a health care setting are very familiar with these hazards, but some employees may only encounter these hazards in an emergency.

The OSEC sponsored training covered various important topics including:

- Developing and Exposure Control Plan
- Regulatory Scope and Application
- Exposure Control Methods
- Bloodborne Pathogens terms and definition
- Responding to a Bloodborne Pathogens event

To register please sign in to sccLearn or visit the OSEC training page at http://www.sccgov.org/sites/osec/SafetyResources/Pages/Training.aspx.

If you could not attend but would like to find out more about bloodborne pathogens, please contact OSEC at (408) 441-4280.
BACK SAFETY

According to California State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF) very year 400,000 American workers suffer temporarily or permanently disabling back injuries. It's not surprising there are so many back injuries on the job. The back is involved in almost every move your employees make during the workday. All that work puts a lot of strain on the back. Sometimes injuries occur by making one mistake, but often it’s a cumulative effect.

The good news is that back injuries can be prevented.

Simple precautions can keep employees’ backs safe that should be used at work, at home and anytime your back is involved. Use these back-saving tips:

- Use material handling aids such as hand trucks, pallet jacks, carts, dollies, etc. to handle heavy loads
- Keep knees bent when working on your back, and get up frequently to stretch
- Use leverage to increase strength and save the back
- Bend the knees and lift with the legs when shoveling
- Split up big loads into smaller loads that are easier to carry, or get help
- Bend knees and squat down when working low, rather than bending at the waist
- Avoid jumps from short heights such as loading docks, trucks, or platforms (the shock could hurt the back)
- Push rather than pull loads
- Drive with the back firmly supported against the back of the seat, knees bent and slightly higher than the hips
- Avoiding overreaching when reaching for objects and post one arm for support.

The 20-20-20 Rule

Most of us are probably familiar with the concept that overuse of a specific body part can potentially result in an injury. Major league baseball pitchers experience this all the time – even little leaguers these days are all too frequently suffering from elbow or shoulder damage from too much throwing. Practice and repetition are good things, up to a point.

Those of us who work in the field of ergonomics often recommend breaking up long stretches of repetitive work at a computer as an effective strategy to prevent discomfort, which may lead to potential soft-tissue injury. We often suggest performing alternate tasks that require you to get up out of your chair and move around, or perhaps engaging in a simple stretch that can help to relieve localized joint fatigue. Commonly, we refer to these as micro-breaks.

A fairly new concept in micro-breaks is known as the 20-20-20 Rule: Take a 20-second break, every 20 minutes, and look at something at least 20 feet away. Studies have demonstrated the efficacy and effectiveness of taking regular, short-duration micro-breaks. Not only does the rate of injuries decrease, the rate of worker productivity actually increases. Think of this as an opportunity to recharge your batteries throughout the day, as opposed to just slowly watching them run down.

The question is how do you remember to take this short break every twenty minutes? A simple solution is probably sitting nearby as you read this: why not set your smart phone to alert you every twenty minutes when at work? This can likely be done in a variety of ways depending on the type of phone you have. Having it play a short clip of music or a friendly voice reminder is much less annoying than an alarm or buzzer, particularly when you are in the middle of a critical task.

Oh, and that last part of the rule, looking at something at least twenty feet away, gives your eyes a vision break as well. We weren’t designed to operate in a twenty-inch world.

Give this a try and you might find that soreness in your wrist or shoulder slowly going away, and possibly even notice that you have more energy at the end of the day – to toss the baseball around with your kids.

“Not only does the rate of injuries decrease, the rate of worker productivity actually increases.”
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.

Mission Statement

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Avoid such injuries. Repetitive stress injuries include back, neck and arm pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and eye strain.

Unfortunately, ergonomics is not a subject typically taught in elementary school. That only leaves parents to educate children about ergonomics. How do we achieve this? By taking the time to educate yourself and your children. There are many resources on the internet for kid ergonomics that can help. The County also offers a variety of ergonomic resources on the

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should all be familiar with at least some parts of the program.

The major parts of the program include:

◊ Responsibility for administering program
◊ Systems for ensuring that employees comply with safe and healthy work practices
◊ Systems for communicating with employees about safety and health matters
◊ Identification and evaluation of workplace hazards
◊ Procedures to investigate occupational injury, illnesses, or exposure to hazardous substances
◊ Methods and procedures for correcting unsafe or unhealthy conditions and work practices
◊ Specific occupational health and safety programs
◊ Occupational health and safety training program.

Maybe you’ve seen the County’s IIPP in action such as a workplace safety inspection or in a safety committee discussion. Maybe you even took part in the program by reporting a hazard to your Supervisor or OSEC. These are all examples of our IIPP and the more you know about how it works the stronger our program will become. To find out more about our IIPP log onto http://osec and click on the Resources tab.