



YCPARMIA Safety Journal

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Keep Your Guard Up

Be a relentless hazard inspector

Many common workplace accidents occur because people let their guard down. They get to thinking that nothing bad has happened so far, so nothing *could* or *will* happen today or tomorrow.

Unfortunately, that may not be true. If you stop looking for hazards, one of these days, one of them is probably going to get you. How bad you're hurt will depend on how bad the hazard is.

So don't let your guard down. Don't let that hazard sneak up on you. Inspect your work area at the beginning of your shift and periodically throughout the workday.

Check tools and equipment before you use them. Inspect personal protective equipment (PPE) before *each* use to make sure they'll protect you as they're supposed to. While you work, keep your guard up and keep checking for potential problems.

In other words, be a hazard inspector all the time. Here's what to look for:

✓ **Obvious hazards** such as wet floors, poor housekeeping, leaking chemical containers, or poorly stacked supplies that could topple over on someone.

✓ **Hidden hazards** such as shocks from electrical equipment, burns from surfaces you don't realize are hot, trips over objects you don't see, and hazardous chemical vapors you can't see or smell.

✓ **Hazards that weren't there the last time you looked.** Remember that things change all the time in the workplace.

✓ **New hazards** introduced by new procedures or equipment. You'll learn about new hazards in safety meetings. Then it's your job to keep alert for them.

✓ **Old hazards** you thought had been corrected. Sometimes fixes don't work as well as you anticipated, and hazards you thought had been eliminated come back to haunt you. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security about safety.

It isn't hard to protect yourself from hazards when you understand them and can recognize them. So keep your guard up all the time and inspect, inspect, inspect!

INSPECT YOURSELF FOR SAFETY

When safety experts talk about workplace inspections, they're usually talking about inspecting things. But what about people? Shouldn't they be inspected for safety, too?

At the start of every workday do you give yourself a good once over?

- Are you wearing required PPE?
- Do you have on sensible shoes with nonslip soles or safety shoes?
- Have you secured long hair, long sleeves, or other items that could get caught in moving parts if you're going to be working around machinery?
- Are you wide awake and fully alert?
- How's your safety attitude?
- Have you covered cuts and scrapes with a bandage to keep them clean while you work?
- Have you talked to your supervisor if you're taking any medications that could make you drowsy or slow to respond to danger and place you at risk of an accident?
- Have you taken a couple of minutes to stretch and loosen up your muscles if you're going to be doing physical work?
- Is your work posture relaxed and correct so that you avoid stresses and strains on your body while you work?
- Is your mind fully focused on your work, and not on personal problems or what you're going to do after work?
- Is all the information you need to work safely firmly fixed in your mind?

Good!

Now you're ready to work safely.

But remember to keep your guard up and inspect yourself again when you return from meals and coffee breaks.

Electrical Accidents

Are you taking proper precautions?

Do you always:

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Keep areas around electrical equipment clear of combustible materials? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Keep metal objects away from electricity? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Avoid touching anything electrical with wet hands or while standing on a wet floor? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Remove from service any malfunctioning electrical equipment and report the problem to your supervisor right away? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Leave electrical repairs and maintenance to specially trained, qualified, and authorized personnel? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Avoid using plugs with bent or missing grounding prongs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Check to make sure electrical connections are tight? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Make sure outlets or circuits are not overloaded? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use extension cords only when necessary and only if they are rated high enough for the job? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Use only cords approved for the purpose outdoors, in wet areas, or in areas where there are flammable materials? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Check plugs and the insulation on cords and wires to make sure they are in good condition? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Take care not to place electrical cords near heat or water? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Avoid tangling electrical cords or fastening them with staples? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- To work safely with electricity, all of your answers need to be "yes."

Why Report Close Calls?

Think what could happen to the next guy

If you have a near miss at work, what should you do?

- Consider yourself lucky and go back to work.
- Report the incident to your supervisor.

The correct answer is b. Here's why:

Larry was coming down an extension ladder when he lost his footing and almost fell. Fortunately, he was holding on with both hands and was able to prevent a fall. He discovered the cause of his near-miss was a rung that had come loose on one side. After he got down, he used a hammer to tap the rung back into place, and it seemed to hold. Then he put the ladder back in the storeroom without reporting the loose rung or tagging the broken ladder "out of service."

The next day when Ted was using the same ladder, the rung came loose again. Unfortunately for Ted, he was only holding on to one rail and wasn't able to grab the other. He fell 6 feet to the ground, injuring his back and suffering a broken collarbone.

Had Larry reported the problem with the ladder, it would have been taken out of service, inspected, and properly repaired. And Ted wouldn't be laid up in the hospital with serious injuries.

PROTECT YOUR EYES

February is **Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month**. So what better time to talk about eye injuries on the job?

Here are some facts you should know.

- **Flying objects** are the leading cause of eye injuries in the workplace. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) says that well over half of eye accidents are caused by flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye. And a significant number of those objects are smaller than a pinhead.
- **Contact with chemicals** causes some 20 percent of eye injuries.
- **Equipment operation** is responsible for over 30 percent of injuries.
- **Poor choice of eyewear** results in a significant number of injuries. Although injured workers are wearing eye protection, they're not wearing the right kind.
- **Improper fit** can allow objects or chemicals to get to the eyes despite protection.
- **Lack of awareness** of the risks and the required protection is responsible for many workplace eye injuries. The BLS says that many injured workers report after an accident that they didn't realize eye protection was necessary in the situation.

One more stat: **90 percent or more of all workplace eye injuries are preventable**. All you have to do is take proper precautions and wear appropriate eye protection. If you're not sure about necessary precautions or which kind of eye protection to wear, check with your supervisor.

Dermatitis?

Understanding exposure and protection

Your skin can be exposed to a variety of hazards on the job, and some hazards can cause inflammation and irritation of the skin—a condition known as **dermatitis**. There are two general types of dermatitis, primary irritation and sensitization.

Primary irritation usually results from contact with a substance in sufficient quantity, concentration, and time to produce a definite effect on the skin directly at the exposure site. Strong acids, caustics, and solvents are examples of substances that can cause primary irritation dermatitis.

Sensitization is the result of an allergic reaction to a substance. The sensitivity is usually established over a long period of time, and once established, exposure to even a small amount of the substance can produce a severe case of dermatitis.

To prevent either kind of dermatitis, avoid contact with the substances that can harm your skin. The best way to do that is to use appropriate protection such as gloves, sleeves, aprons, and so on. If you have a sensitivity to a certain substance, let your supervisor know. And if, despite protection, you get a substance on your skin, wash the area carefully with a lot of water for several minutes. If dermatitis develops, see your doctor and get proper treatment.



Pain in the Neck?

Tips for avoiding neck spasms

The main causes of neck spasms in the workplace are poor posture and improper lifting. Here are some simple ways to avoid neck pain.

When you stand:

- Keep your shoulders relaxed and in line with your ears.
- Maintain the natural curves of your spine.
- Stand with feet about shoulder-width apart and distribute your weight evenly over both feet.
- Keep your knees slightly flexed and your hips centered over your knees.

When you sit:

- Sit up straight and avoid slouching, hunching over your work, or leaning forward in your chair.
- Keep your head centered over your shoulders, not tilted forward, backward, or to one side.
- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, not tensed.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor or resting on a footstool.

When you lift:

- Face the load with feet shoulder-width apart.
- Keep heels down and turn feet slightly out.
- Squat by bending at the hips and knees.
- Use leg and stomach muscles to power the lift—not back muscles.
- Keep your head up as you lift.

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

More than a quarter of American workers have been injured while working, often missing substantial time away from work as a result. So says one survey of 1,000 workers by the legal information website FindLaw.com.

According to the survey, 28 percent of American adults report job injuries. The figure is 36 percent for men. Among all those injured 43 percent said they missed more than a week of work as a result of their injury, and 31 percent said they were off for more than a month.

What's the answer to all these injuries and lost workdays? "If you take care of the small stuff, the big stuff won't happen," says Anil Mathur, CEO of the Alaska Tanker Company of Beaverton, Oregon.

That's good advice for us all. If you keep alert to small problems and fix them before they turn into big, dangerous problems, you can avoid most accidents and injuries.

Check Your List

Take responsibility for safe housekeeping

OSHA requires us to keep the workplace “clean, orderly, and in a sanitary condition” to prevent injuries and illness. To ensure a safe place to work, we all have to pitch in and take responsibility for good, safe housekeeping.

- Don't leave tools, cords, boxes, and other tripping hazards on the floor.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Never place materials in aisles and passageways or on the stairs.
- Stack materials carefully and securely so that they don't fall over.
- Don't leave sharp tools lying around with their edges exposed.
- Turn off and unplug power tools when you're not using them.
- Keep drawers closed so they do not become a tripping hazard.
- Don't let combustible trash and scrap build up. Dispose of it safely at regular intervals.
- Keep flammable and combustible materials away from ignition sources.
- Make sure chemical containers are properly sealed and not leaking.
- Prevent dirt and grease from building up on machinery.
- Smoke only where permitted, and make sure cigarettes and matches are properly extinguished.
- Avoid keeping food and beverage in the work area.
- Report any hazards you can't safely eliminate yourself.

Heart Health and You

Are you headed for a heart attack?

February is **National Heart Month**, so it's a good time to think about your heart. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both women and men in the United States. As many as 40 percent of American adults have risk factors for heart disease. What do you know about heart health and heart attacks?

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Lowering cholesterol and blood pressure can reduce the risk of developing heart disease. | T F |
| 2. Heart disease is caused entirely by bad health habits. | T F |
| 3. Smokers are more than twice as likely to have a heart attack than nonsmokers. | T F |
| 4. Unless you're 100 pounds overweight, weight has little effect on your risk of a heart attack. | T F |
| 5. Women are more likely to have heart attacks than men. | T F |
| 6. To reduce the risk of a heart attack eat less fat. | T F |
| 7. Strenuous exercise increases your risk of having a heart attack. | T F |

- Answers:** (1) T
 (2) F. If you have a family history of heart disease, you're at greater risk.
 (3) T
 (4) F. Being 20 percent or more over ideal weight increases risks.
 (5) F. Men are still at greater risk, but women are gaining fast.
 (6) T
 (7) F. But see your doctor before starting an exercise program.

ARE YOU SAFE ON THE JOB?

How do you know if your safety is at risk? Look for signs that you and your co-workers are getting lax about safety. For example:

- Has there been an increase in accidents or near misses?
- Is your work area dirty, disorganized, or harboring hidden hazards?
- Are people working without required personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- Are you or any of your co-workers taking shortcuts, skipping steps, or not following safety rules?
- Is anyone using tools and equipment improperly?
- Are new employees unaware of any safety hazards or requirements?
- Are people getting careless, rushing through their work, not looking out for co-workers, or fooling around?
- Do people miss safety meetings or skip training sessions?
- Are workers failing to report hazards, accidents, or near misses?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” your risk of injury increases. So step up and speak up for safety.



“What am I doing? Inspecting hazards, just like you asked!”