

Looking SHARP

Volume 9, Issue 1  Summer 2009

"Improving Safety & Health For SHARP Companies"



In This Issue

<i>Workplace Influenza Plans Encouraged</i>	1
<i>Hard Times Shouldn't Mean Safety Cuts</i>	3
<i>Setting The Record Straight</i>	3
<i>Recognizing Excellence</i>	4
<i>Cancer Facts: Prevention Vital</i>	4
<i>The Writer's Block: Safety By Accident</i>	4
<i>Industrial Hygiene: A Primer on Workplace Health</i> .	5
<i>Things That Make You Go Huh?</i>	5
<i>OSU-OKC Family Health & Safety Day</i>	6

Workplace Influenza Plans Encouraged

It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever a pandemic starts, everyone around the world is at risk. Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of the virus, but cannot stop it.

The recent outbreak of the H1N1 "swine" flu is proof of that. Already, the virus has claimed the life of one toddler in Texas and researchers are now looking for the source of the outbreak in areas where it was first reported. By isolating the elusive and hard to determine "patient zero", researchers can get a better genetic model of the virus and track its stages of mutation to determine how to fight it and what form of vaccinations need to be developed. Even then, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports it could take up to six months for an acceptable vaccine to be mass produced, correctly dosed and ready for distribution.

During an outbreak or pandemic, transmission can be anticipated in the workplace, not only from patient to workers in health care settings, but also among co-workers in general work settings. A pandemic would cause high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss. Everyday life would be disrupted because so many people in so many places become seriously ill at the same time. Impacts could range from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and food delivery.

"Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure the safety and health of America's employees by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continual improvement in workplace safety and health." Said Ed G. Foulke, Jr., former Assistant Secretary of OSHA.



THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR HAS MOVED!

Effective **June 1, 2009**, the Oklahoma City office of the Department of Labor is located at:

3017 North Stiles, Suite 100

(one block west of Lincoln, just north of the Capitol at NW 30th).

The Agency's main phone number is now:

(405) 521-6100

New phone numbers and email addresses for the Consultation Division's staff are available on our website at www.labor.ok.gov.

See *Influenza In The Workplace*, page 2

Influenza In The Workplace (Continued from page 1)

As an employer, you have an important role in protecting employee health and safety, and limiting the impact of an influenza pandemic. It is important to work with community planners to integrate your pandemic plan into local and state planning, particularly if your operations are part of the nation's critical infrastructure or key resources. Integration with local community planners will allow you to access resources and information promptly to maintain operations and keep your employees safe.

Education and outreach are critical to preparing for a pandemic. Understanding what a pandemic is, what needs to be done at all levels to prepare for pandemic influenza, and what could happen during a pandemic helps us make informed decisions both as individuals and as a nation.

Additionally, employers need to prepare for a pandemic in the same fashion they prepare for severe weather, with an emergency action plan.

In the event of pandemic influenza, businesses will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as limiting the negative impact to the economy and society. Planning for pandemic influenza is critical. To assist you in your efforts, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed the following checklist for businesses. It identifies important, specific activities large businesses can do now to prepare, many of which will also help you in other emergencies.

Some of the items included in the checklist are:

- Identify a pandemic coordinator and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. The planning process should include input from labor representatives.
- Determine potential impact of a pandemic on company business financials using multiple possible scenarios that affect different product lines and/or production sites.
- Determine potential impact of a pandemic on business-related domestic and international travel (e.g.

quarantines, border closures).

- Forecast and allow for employee absences during a pandemic due to factors such as personal illness, family member illness, community containment measures and quarantines, school and/or business closures, and public transportation closures.

- Implement guidelines to modify the frequency and type of face-to-face contact (e.g. hand-shaking, seating in meetings, office layout, shared workstations) among employees and between employees and customers (refer to CDC recommendations).

- Establish policies for preventing influenza spread at the worksite (e.g. promoting respiratory hygiene/ cough etiquette, and prompt exclusion of people with influenza symptoms).

- Provide sufficient and accessible infection control supplies (e.g. hand-hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal) in all business locations.

- Anticipate employee fear and anxiety, rumors and misinformation and plan communications accordingly.

- Establish an emergency communications plan and revise periodically. This plan includes identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.

- Implement an exercise/drill to test your plan, and revise periodically.

Should a pandemic occur the public must be able to depend on its government to provide scientifically sound public health information quickly, openly and dependably.

For additional information on pandemic influenza, visit the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/flu or the OSHA website at www.osha.gov. Further information can be found at also be found at www.pandemicflu.gov and www.cdc.gov/business.

Source: OSHA and CDC

The Oklahoma State Department of Health is urging Oklahomans to be on alert for the H1N1 strain of influenza that has been confirmed in other states, and now in Oklahoma. The OSDH has set up a phone bank for persons with questions about swine flu. The toll free number is 1-866-278-7134.

*"I urge Oklahomans to take common sense measures to guard against the illness. Panic is not helpful, but caution is."
— Governor Brad Henry*

Hard Times Shouldn't Mean Safety Cuts

Times are tough all over, and more and more Oklahoma companies are struggling just to keep the doors open. While safety might seem like a natural area to make cuts-backs in order to allow more resources for production, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Now, more than ever, Oklahoma workers need safe and healthful work places so they can earn a living for their families and employers need to have workers to make money. What needs to be eliminated is waste. Injuries and illnesses equal wasted money, wasted time and costs a business more than the obvious direct costs.

So, how do you make safety work when times are hard. BST Solutions offers these helpful hints:

Open up and communicate why safety matters now, more than ever. Employees anxious about the impact of the economy on the company, and on them personally, can be at increased risk for injury. Leaders need to be out front, demonstrating concern, listening, and taking appropriate actions.

Consider the effects of your actions on the culture.

How leaders “do the hard stuff” - layoffs, job assignments, budget cuts - will dictate how people engage in safety and the business now and down the road.

Refine your strategy. Oftentimes safety performance can become bogged down, both financially and functionally, by legacy systems that no longer meet the needs of the business. Many companies find that their actual needs dictate an investment in fewer (or different) systems than they have right now.

Work the fundamentals. Survival in a downturn, for any part of the business, is about targeting the core elements that sustain the enterprise. In safety performance, that means protecting the lives and livelihoods of employees. Life-altering injuries and fatalities must be a primary concern.

Demonstrate and develop transformational leadership. Leaders who use a transformational style are more successful at creating the will to go “above and beyond” self-interest and give people a sense of purpose, belonging, and understanding regarding the work they do.



Setting The Record Straight

by Heather Hartman, USDOL-OSHA
Oklahoma City Area Office

What is meant by “a culture of safety and responsibility”? Who cares? And why? The answer to the first question requires a bit of explanation, so let me respond to others first.

Who cares? OSHA cares, and general contractors, contractors and subcontractors should care. Why? Because a culture of safety and responsibility is key to safe site operations and to a reduced risk of work-related injuries. Also, the OKC Area Office will be focusing on the importance of establishing “a culture of safety and responsibility” during outreach efforts and enforcement activity.

A safety culture is driven by site safety management programs established by the general contractors that cover the entire site, all operations and activities, and all contractors and site workers at all stages of the construction project. Enforcement experience has shown the following key elements to be critical to successful programs:

1. A GC designated on site person responsible for site safety with authority & accountability.
2. Worksite Analysis program that includes:
 - Pre-planning – identification of potential hazards associated with each stage of the project site and establishment of appropriate hazard prevention / control measures. This pre-planning assessment would include the anticipated job tasks / activities of contractors coming on site at each stage of the project (GC may expect contractors to make assessments and provide documentation for review prior to site work.)
 - Daily pre-job assessments
 - Routine work area inspections
 - Hazard tracking and abatement verification procedures
 - Hazard reporting and correction procedures (integrates participation by all site contractors and site workers)
 - Contractor oversight program
 - Employee training program

Just a couple final thoughts: As a controlling employer, general contractors can not “contract away” their statutory responsibilities for site safety to other contractors or sub contractors to perform. The more “rea-



Recognizing Excellence

Companies achieving SHARP status are the “best of the best”. In this issue of Looking SHARP, we recognize these *Top Guns* of safety excellence:

Metals USA Plates & Shapes - Enid

Robertson’s Hams, Inc - Marietta

Mill Creek Lumber - Owasso

Cust-O-Fab - Sand Springs

Acord Transportatin - Chandler

Steel Coil Services - Catoosa

Steel Fabricators - Oklahoma City

Waste Management of Oklahoma City

Muskogee Community Landfill - Muskogee

Quarry Landfill - Tulsa

Waste Management of Tulsa

Transformer Disposal Specialists - Tonkawa

Congratulations on your achievement and keep up the hard work!



The Writer’s Block: Safety By Accident

by Betsey Kulakowski



Kulakowski

Like many of you, I did not graduate high school with ambitions of becoming, of all things, a safety professional. I had a scholarship to Southern Nazarine University to study music and had every intention of becoming either a music teacher or a writer. Becoming a safety professional was not even on my list of things to do. You could say, I got into safety by accident.

But life happened and closed windows became open doors, and at the tender age of 20, I found myself working at the Department of Labor. It started out as “just a job”, but over the years it became a career, and now, as I celebrate my 20th anniversary with the Agency, safety is my calling.

I know many of our companies don’t have the budgets and resources to have a full time safety professional on staff. Some of you started out as production managers, HR Managers, maintenance supervisors or union officials who, like me, fell into the role of a safety professional...some of you kicking and screaming, others willingly.

Like me, you may not have a degree in safety, but have had to educate yourself. Fortunately, OSHA taught me everything I know about safety, and they’re willing to help educate you too.

OSHA has developed several types and levels of Outreach training courses that you may find beneficial. The OSHA 10- and 30-hour courses are taught by “authorized” training providers (beware of the ones who say they are “OSHA Approved”) and cover a set curriculum, in either construction or general industry. The authorized trainers have completed an advanced “Train-the-trainer” course in order to be able to do what they do, and must report to OSHA and are subject to audits of their training courses. While the OSHA 10-hour course is considered “basic awareness level” training, the OSHA 30-hour is more advanced and is recommended for managers or supervisors who oversee safety. While the training is not “required” many industries are incorporating the Outreach training courses into their training plans because it is recognized by OSHA and Industry as top-notch training. Sound like something that would help you do your job more effectively? For more information on OSHA Outreach training, contact your local Career Tech, the Oklahoma Safety Council or visit the OSHA website’s “training” page at: www.osha.gov/dte/outreach/construction_generalindustry/index.html

Kids Say The Darndest Things

“Now,” said the teacher, “we all know that a one-L lama is a priest in Tibet. And a two-L llama is an animal found in South America. Can anyone tell me if there is such a thing as a three-L llama?”

Little Johnny blurted, “Sure there is? It’s a heckuva fire!”

Source: Make Safety Fun by Richard Hawk

Cancer Facts: Prevention Vital

The statistics on cancer are grim. According to the International Cancer Council (ICC), Cancer accounts for 34% of the estimated global work-related mortality, higher than any other single factor, including physical injury. Four percent of all cancer deaths in the U.S. are thought to be related to exposures in the workplace. Additionally, scientists estimate that as many as 50–75% of cancer deaths in the United States are caused by human behaviors such as smoking, physical inactivity, and poor dietary choices.

Until there is a cure, prevention is the best way to defeat cancer. Proper care in controlling workplace exposures to chemicals, cigarette smoke and other carcinogens is vital. Employers can also take the extra step to promote employee health initiatives to improve diet and exercise, as well as smoking cessation programs. Individuals must accept responsibility for their own health by choosing the right health behaviors and preventing exposure to certain environmental risk factors can help prevent the development of cancer.

Source: Internacutlural Cancer Council

Source: Associated Press

Industrial Hygiene: A Primer on Workplace Health

Industrial hygiene is defined as *the science of the protection and improvement of the health of workers in their vocational environment*. Every occupation from construction, to oil and gas, to manufacturing, retail, and medical has its own set of challenges to ensuring the health of its workers.

Safety professionals typically look for the things that make people hurt, physical hazards, such as moving machinery and equipment; i.e., cranes, forklifts, lathes, power presses, fire hazards, blocked exit ways, how materials are stored and handled.



The industrial hygienist's task is to identify the things that may make people sick, such as noise, hazardous chemicals, biological agents, etc. These are not always things you can see, and may take special equipment to identify.

Health hazards are typically hard to recognize, but clues to their existence may be present, such as

- visible dust or fume cloud
- strong odors
- complaints of eye irritation
- complaints of skin irritation
- difficulty hearing things in the workplace

However, there are times that these clues may be deceiving. Just because something smells bad doesn't necessarily mean it's a hazard. For example, 5 ppm (parts per million) of ammonia will gag an average person, however the permissible exposure limit (PEL) is 25 ppm. On the other hand, ethylene oxide gas, used in hospitals to sterilize equipment can't be smelled until it exists in quantities greater than 700 ppm, while the PEL is only 1 ppm. Other hazards can't be seen or smelled, such as carbon monoxide.

Fortunately, industrial hygienists have, in their arsenal, several ways to monitor for the things that can't be seen. Industrial hygienists use environmental monitoring and analytical methods to detect the extent of worker exposure and employ engineering, work practice controls, and other methods to control potential health hazards.

Industrial hygienists, or IHs, are trained to anticipate, recognize, evaluate, and recommend controls for environmental and physical hazards that can affect the health and well-being of workers.

A worksite analysis is an essential first step that helps an industrial hygienist determine what jobs and work stations are the sources of potential problems. During

the worksite analysis, the industrial hygienist collects samples, or measures and identifies exposures, problem tasks, and risks. The most effective worksite analyses include all jobs, operations, and work activities. The industrial hygienist inspects, researches, or ana-

lyzes how the particular chemicals or physical hazards at that worksite affect worker health. If a situation hazardous to health is discovered, the industrial hygienist recommends the appropriate corrective actions.

Effective management of worker safety and health protection is a decisive factor in reducing the extent and severity of work-related injuries and illnesses and their related costs.

On-Site Consultation assistance is available upon request to employers who want help in establishing and maintaining a safe and healthful workplace, including industrial hygiene monitoring and testing. Largely funded by OSHA, the service is provided at no cost to the employer. For more information, or to request assistance, please call (405) 528-1500, ext 276, or visit us on the web at www.labor.ok.gov.

Editor's Note: Did you know? More than 40 percent of the OSHA compliance officers who inspect America's workplaces are industrial hygienists.

Source: OSHA

Things That Make You Go 'Huh?'

Masked Bandits: Three armed thieves wore the blue surgical masks now ubiquitous in flu-hit Mexico City to hide their faces as they robbed watches from a department store, Mexican media said.

Employees and security guards at a branch of the Sanborns department store told the daily Excelsior the thieves were able to slip through the shop Sunday without attracting attention as they blended into a sea of masked shoppers.

Assault and Batteries: A Radio Shack employee in Eau Claire is facing disorderly conduct and battery charges for punching a customer.

Police say the customer was trying to return an item, but the employee wouldn't let him. The customer then asked to talk to a manager.

That's when the 52-year-old male employee began punching the man. A bystander called 911. The employee is due in court this summer.



Sources: Associated Press

Setting the Record Straight *(Continued from Page 3)*

sonable care” a general contractor takes for site safety as the controlling employer, the greater likelihood of fewer work-related accidents and receipt of issued citations for the unsafe acts of other contractors and site workers.

Similarly, remember contractors and subcontractors, as employers, you are responsible for the safety of your employees, and that OSHA’s multi-employer worksite policy can cast a broad net in the issuance of citations to multiple contractors on a worksite for the unsafe acts of others. This policy underlies an expectation of shared responsibility for safe site operations.

Where can you get help? For more information on safety and health management systems, visit the OSHA Website at www.osha.gov, or call the Oklahoma Department of Labor at 405/521-6100*, or contact the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education - Business and Industry Division at 405/743-5547.

Until next time...be careful out there.

** Don't forget our number changed June 1st (See page 1 for details)*

Looking SHARP is a quarterly publication by the Oklahoma Department of Labor, OSHA Consultation Division. This publication is intended to assist employers pursuing SHARP Certification, as well as other employers, with improving safety and health conditions in their workplaces. If you have questions and/or suggestions for future issues, or if you would like to subscribe to our email version of Looking SHARP, contact the editor, Betsy Kulakowski, via email at Betsy.Kulakowski@labor.ok.gov or call 405-521-6145.

OSU-OKC Family Health & Safety Day

OSU-OKC will host it's fourth annual Family Health and Safety Day on Saturday, **September 12, 2009** from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. OSU-OKC at OSU-OKC at 3401 W. Reno, north of Mathis Brothers Furniture.

This fun outdoor event will feature free car seat safety checks and several give-aways, while supplies last, including: gun locks, fingerprinting cards, smoke detectors, safety reflectors, and much more. **Plus don't miss out on the GRAND PRIZE DRAWINGS!**

Participants will be able to gain valuable health and safety information on topics such as teen safety in the workplace, pet safety, internet safety, camping and outdoor safety, landscaping safety and much, much more!

Participants can also get their blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol checked during the event. Representatives with the campus will be available to discuss career opportunities.

Kids can bring their bikes and helmets and enter the bike rodeo, get their faces painted, participate in the “kid’s arts festival” and enjoy the moon bounce. The Oklahoma City Fire Departments’ life-saving smoke trailer will be available as well as OG&E’s Electrical Safety Town.

For more information including sponsorship opportunities, contact Debbie Humphrey at dlhumph@osuokc.edu or visit the website at www.osuokc.edu/fhsd

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