

news & notes

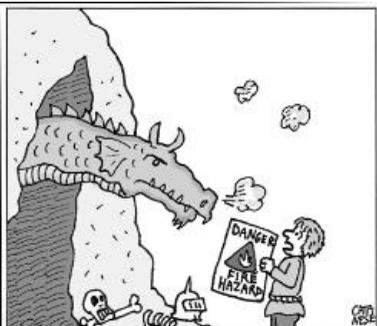
BURN AWARENESS

Burns are a common workplace injury. When they're not too serious, they can be effectively treated with first aid. But some burns can be serious—even life threatening—and these require immediate professional medical attention as well as appropriate on-the-spot first aid.

This means you need to know how to treat minor burns and how to care for more serious burns until help arrives. And you need to be able to identify the difference between a bad burn and a minor one, too.

How bad a burn is depends on how many layers it affects. Minor heat burns just affect the outer layer of skin. They may be uncomfortable, but they aren't a big health risk. Deeper burns that injure or destroy the next layer of skin, however, are a cause for concern. When this layer is affected, infection is a risk that has to be controlled. The most serious burns go really deep and injure or destroy muscle and nerve tissue.

The least serious burns are known as "first-degree" burns because they only affect the first layer of skin. The most serious burns are "third-degree" burns. First-degree burns are easy to identify. The top layer of skin gets red right away. Second-degree burns involve both reddened skin and some blistering. Third-degree burns look charred, and you might be able to see tissue underneath the destroyed skin that appears white.



"Oh—hi. A bunch of us were wondering if we could put up this sign..."



2011-02

Beware Burn Hazards

The first step to protection

Because there are so many potential burn hazards on the job, you need to be alert to their presence. Take precautions to prevent fires and contact with heat when you encounter any of the following burn hazards:

- Flammable liquids such as oil, solvents, and many chemicals often have invisible vapors that move quickly through the air. Put them together with an ignition source—even a spark—and you could have a fire.
- Smoking is a hazard because lit cigarettes or matches can be an ignition source for paper, flammable liquids, or almost anything that's capable of burning.
- Welding and cutting operations create flames and sparks, so they're a potential cause of burns themselves and of fires.
- Hot machines and processes are another potential burn hazard.
- Space heaters can, if not used properly, cause fires—and, therefore, burns.
- Very hot water is yet another burn hazard.

Also be aware of electrical hazards that could burn you directly or cause electrical fires. These hazards include:

- Wiring with frayed or worn insulation
- Overloaded circuits, fuses, motors, or outlets
- Loose ground connections
- Lights or machinery that come in contact with combustible materials
- Direct contact with power lines or other live wires

Know when the chemicals you use are a potential burn hazard by using your basic chemical information tools:

- Container labels
- Material safety data sheets

If they tell you a substance can catch fire under certain circumstances or that it can burn your skin on contact, you know you have to take precautions. See other stories on preventing fires and burns elsewhere in this issue.

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SAFETY FROM HEAD ...

Hard hats need to be inspected before each use for cracks or dents. Replace a headband that's stretched or worn. Replace the whole hat if the shell is cracked, broken, or punctured or if it has taken a heavy blow, even if damage doesn't show.

Replace hard hats after 2 years when they are worn in work environments that include sunlight, chemicals, or extreme temperatures. Most manufacturers mold date codes or symbols into the underside of the brim of a hard hat to indicate when it was made. Learn how to read the code/symbol. Ask your supplier for expiration dates.

... TO TOE

Many workers face potential foot hazards. Use safety shoes with impact protection if you carry or work with heavy items that may fall onto your feet.

Shoes or boots with compression protection are important if you work with manual carts and objects such as barrels or bulk paper rolls, or face the hazard of objects rolling over your feet.

Wear shoes with extra metatarsal protection to shield your insteps from impact and compression hazards.

If you work in areas where you may step on sharp objects, wear safety shoes with puncture protection.

If you face electrical hazards, wear nonconductive, insulated safety shoes that break an electrical circuit.



What Does An Accident Cost?

Every accident has something in common: It costs everyone involved something. There are direct and indirect costs, both to the employee who was injured and the employer who eventually will pay for the accident. The costs are more than dollars.

§ Employee Direct Costs

- includes lost regular wages and overtime

§ Employee Indirect Costs

- mental anguish, physical pain and suffering
- decreased active participation with family and friends

§ Employer Direct Costs

- Workers' Compensation claim
- medical bills
- associated legal and possible increased insurance costs.

§ Employer Indirect Costs

- Loss of valuable employee with a result of lost efficiency on the job
- managerial and clerical time expended to handle injury claims
- time loss wages paid with no work performed
- hiring and training replacement
- damaged or destroyed equipment, materials or tools

Remember - The indirect (or hidden) cost in an accident is between three and ten times the actual cost of the claim. But it is not the costs, direct or indirect, that totals the most. More often than not it is the loss of a valuable co-worker or member of a family that causes the most problems.

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Accidents Are Avoidable

Each time someone is injured, we need to ask ourselves "how did it happen?" Accidents just don't happen, they are caused. Accidents are usually a result of someone not paying attention or not knowing how to recognize a job (or home or automobile) safety hazard. Jobs with effective safety attitudes have about a fifth as many injuries compared to those without the safety attitude. Let's look at some general rules to follow and the four hazard avoidance rules.

General Rules

- Learn the safe way to do your job.
- Don't jump from one elevation to another.
- Don't work under suspended loads.
- Remove protruding nails or bend them over.
- Keep the work area clear of debris.
- Use the personal protective equipment required for the job.
- Treat all electrical wires as being "live."
- Use the right tool for the right job.
- Be sure all tools are in good shape.

Four Hazard Avoidance Rules

- Know the safe way to work, and then follow the safe way all the time.
- Maintain safe working conditions - for yourself and others around you.
- Work safely, setting the example, and encourage others to do so.
- Report all accidents and near misses.

Additional Rules

- Keep scaffolds free of excess weight.
- Avoid hazards.
- Report accidents and near misses to Supervisor

Remember to ask yourself if you are following the basic common sense rules? If you aren't following them, then take the chance and you will have or cause an accident. Keep asking yourself "how can I make my work safer?" Doing so and you will probably not have a serious accident, and help prevent a serious accident for a fellow worker.