WisCon Words of Wisdom

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April Awareness Topics

April 1-30: Distracted Driving Awareness Month and National Safe Digging Month

April 1-7: National Public Health Week and National Window Safety Week

April 7: World Health Day

April 15-19: National Work Zone Awareness Week and National Stand-Down to Prevent Struck-By Incidents

April 28: Workers Memorial Day

Upcoming Webinars

Public Sector:

April 30th: Bloodborne Pathogens

June 25th: Heat Stress

August 27th Confined Space Hazard Awareness

We want to hear from you!

What content would you like to see in an upcoming newsletter? Let us know here.

Remembering Lost Workers

Workers Memorial Day is April 28th, and is recognized throughout the world. Both OSHA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) are hosting Workers Memorial Events on April 22-25th to honor those lost or who have been severely injured at work. If you visit OSHA's Workers Memorial Wall, you can view names, ages, and photos of individuals who lost their lives on the job. Often times we hear about workplace incidents and near misses, but if you haven't had the unfortunate experience of losing someone on the job scrolling down this wall can put into perspective how many people who die each year just doing their jobs. As we remember the lives lost, let us aim to make our work places safer and healthier so that employees can go home in the same condition as they came to work in – or better.

Bloodborne Pathogens – What You Need To Know

Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganism present in the blood that can cause disease in humans. Hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are some examples of bloodborne pathogens. Exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) containing these pathogens puts employees at risk for serious or life-threatening illnesses.

Employees working in the health care industry and those designated by their employer to render first aid and clean-up accidents are prime examples of who the Bloodborne Pathogens standard was intended to protect. Any employee reasonably anticipated to come into contact with blood or OPIMs as a result of their job duties must be covered under a bloodborne pathogen exposure control plan.

It is relevant to note that the bloodborne pathogens standard only covers exposure to human blood and OPIMs. Exposure to animal blood, such as in veterinary clinics, slaughter houses, and meat packing facilities are not within the standard's scope.

Register for our webinar on April 30th for more information.

Hard Hats or Safety Helmets?

Here lately there seems to be some discussion of hard hats versus safety helmets going on. At the office we received a call asking if OSHA had released a new standard requiring the use of Safety Helmets on construction sites. Additionally, in conversation with one of our local OSHA contacts, they mentioned that their office had received a supply of safety helmets to add to their personal protective equipment (PPE).

It is true that OSHA issued a Trade Release in December announcing their switch from the use of traditional hard hats to safety helmets to better protect their employees from head injuries. Furthermore, OSHA released a Safety and Health Information Bulletin titled Head Protection: Safety Helmets in the Workplace that included a list of recommended uses for safety helmets. However, OSHA has not released a new regulation requiring employers to make the switch from hard hats to safety helmets. The Occupational Safety and Health standard for Head Protection (29 CFR 1910.135) remains unchanged.

With that being said, employers must ensure they are providing employees with PPE that protects them from workplace hazards. Some employers may decide to make safety helmets a required piece of PPE at their workplace or job site based on their job hazard analysis and their acceptable level of risk. We've heard of a few General Contractors requiring safety helmets to be worn on their job sites.

Hard hats have long been the go-to option for protecting employees' heads. They provide a basic level of protection from head injuries and are made of high-density polyethylene or other rigid materials. These hats can be bulky, heavy (especially with hearing protection attachments), and may easily fall off an employee's head.

There are a couple of notable differences between hard hats and safety helmets. Safety helmets are lighter in weight, being made from a combination of lightweight composites, fiberglass, and advanced thermoplastics. Since the helmet weighs less, it may reduce neck strain and improve employee comfort when used over a work shift. Safety helmets also come with a chin strap. When used properly, the chin strap helps maintain the helmet's position which can be beneficial if an employee slips, trips, or falls.

Safety helmets can also incorporate additional attachments to address other work place hazards, such as face shields, or safety eyewear to protect against projectiles, dust, and other particulates. Hard hats may also be capable of incorporating some attachments, but options appear to be more limited. Adding attachments to either can increase the weight of the head protections weight and contribute to neck strain. Speaking from experience, wearing ear muff attachments on a traditional hard hat is not fun.

If it's time to replace your employees' hard hats, consider opting for safety helmets to better protect against head injuries.

Regardless of which head protection is worn, ensure it is inspected for signs of wear, damage, expiration so that it is in optimal condition to provide protection.

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