WisCon Words of Wisdom

Volume 5 | Issue 9 | September 2, 2025

September Awareness Topics

September 19: Concussion Awareness Day

September 21-27: National Child Passenger Safety Week

All Month Long:

Alcohol & Drug Recovery

Preparedness

Food Safety Education

Reporting Serious Injuries to OSHA

All employers must report any work-related fatality to OSHA within 8 hours. Additionally, any in-patient hospitalization, amputation, or loss of an eye must be reported within 24 hours of the incident. These reports can be made by calling your local OSHA area office, using the 24-hour hotline (1-800-321-6742), or by submitting an online form. These rules apply to every employer under OSHA jurisdiction, regardless of size or industry. This immediate, mandatory reporting is a separate requirement from routine injury and illness recordkeeping on the OSHA 300 log.

We want to hear from you!

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

September is National Preparedness Month

Observed every September, National Preparedness Month is a nationwide campaign led by FEMA that urges all Americans to prepare for disasters and emergencies. The initiative encourages everyone to take simple but critical steps like making a family emergency plan, building a disaster preparedness kit, and staying informed about potential local hazards. The ultimate goal is to foster a culture of readiness to create a more resilient nation.

The Dangers of Daisy Chaining Extension Cords

In any workplace, from an office to a manufacturing floor, “daisy chaining” extension cords, also known as connected in series, is considered a serious safety violation with significant dangers that fall into the following categories: fire & electrical safety, equipment damage, and physical hazards.

OSHA Regulations

OSHA explicitly prohibits using extension cords in a way that exceeds their certified rating or intended use.

Direct Violation: Daisy chaining is a direct violation of OSHA standard, 29 CFR 1910.303(b)(2), which requires that extension cords be used within their rating as noted on the label and/or product instructions.

Citations and Fines: An OSHA inspector observing this practice during an inspection may issue a citation, which comes with associated financial penalties.

The following are some specific dangers of this practice in a workplace setting:

1. Critical Fire & Electrical Safety Hazards

Every extension cord has a maximum amount of current (amps) that it can safely carry.

Electrical Overload: When cords are chained together, all the electricity for every tool and piece of equipment flows through the very first cord plugged into the wall. This cord can quickly become overloaded, causing its wires to overheat.

Ignition Source: Overheating can melt the cord's insulation, exposing the live conductors. This can lead to a short circuit, an arc flash, or sparks that can easily ignite common workplace materials like cardboard, wood dust, chemicals, or carpeting, resulting in a fire.

2. Equipment Damage & Operational Downtime

Daisy chaining creates one very long electrical circuit, which leads to a significant drop in voltage by the time the power reaches the equipment at the end of the chain.

Damage to Company Assets: Operating tools, computers, servers, or machinery on low voltage forces them to draw more current to function. This strain can cause motors and electronics to overheat, leading to premature failure and

Continues on Page 2

Tool Box Talk: Respiratory Protection

The hazards we face on the job aren't always visible. Dust, fumes, mists, and vapors can cause serious, sometimes permanent, damage. That's why understanding and correctly using your respiratory protection is important.

Why It Matters: The Invisible Dangers

Think of your respirator as armor for your lungs. Without it, you may be exposed to hazards that can cause immediate problems like dizziness and irritation, or long-term diseases like silicosis, cancer, and COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease).

Many of these diseases develop slowly over years. You might feel fine today, but the damage is being done. Once your lung function is gone, you can't get it back. This isn't just about a workplace safety rule; it's about your quality of life down the road.

When is a Respirator Required?

Respirators are your last line of defense. Always try to use other controls first:

- Engineering Controls: Using ventilation, wet-cutting methods, or other equipment to remove the hazard from the air, preferably at the source to limit the amount circulating in the air.
- Administrative Controls: Changing work practices or rotating jobs to limit exposure.

When these controls aren't enough to bring exposure to safe levels, respirators are mandatory. If you see a sign requiring respirators or your supervisor tells you to wear one, you must do it.

Your Gear: Not All Masks are Equal

There are two main types of respirators you might use:

- Air-Purifying Respirators (APRs): These use filters or cartridges to remove contaminants from the air you breathe. This includes disposable masks (like an N95 for dust), half-face respirators, and full-face respirators with replaceable cartridges. Crucially, the cartridge must match the hazard! A dust filter won't protect you from chemical vapors.
- Supplied-Air Respirators (SARs): These provide clean breathing air from a tank or compressor. They are used in environments with very high contaminant levels or where there isn't enough oxygen.

The 4 Steps to Proper Use: Fit is Everything!

A tight-fitting respirator only works if it forms a perfect seal against your face. If it doesn't seal, you are breathing contaminated air.

1. Be Medically Cleared & Fit-Tested: Before you can wear a respirator, the company must ensure you are medically able to do so and you must pass a fit test for the specific make and model you will wear. Fit testing is an annual requirement. Facial hair (even stubble) will break the seal, making the respirator useless. You must be clean-shaven where the mask seals to your face.
2. Inspect Before Each Use: Check the straps for elasticity, the facepiece for cracks or dirt, and the valves for damage. Make sure you have the correct, unexpired cartridges for the task.
3. Put It On Correctly (Donning): Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Typically, you place the respirator on your face and pull the straps over your head, tightening the bottom straps first, then the top ones. Don't overtighten.
4. Perform a User Seal Check EVERY Time: This is the most important step.
    - Positive Pressure Check: Cover the exhalation valve with your palm and gently breathe out. The facepiece should bulge slightly. If you feel air leaking, readjust and try again.
    - Negative Pressure Check: Cover the filter or cartridge inlets with your palms and gently inhale. The facepiece should collapse slightly against your face. If you feel air leaking, readjust.

If you can't get a good seal, do not enter a hazardous area. Stop and ask your supervisor for help.

The Dangers of Daisy Chaining Extension Cords (Continued from Page 1)

costly damage to expensive, company-owned assets.

Lost Productivity: Equipment that is underpowered performs poorly and inefficiently. This, combined with unplanned downtime for repairs or replacements, directly hurts productivity.

3. Increased Physical Hazards

The string of cords itself creates a dangerous environment on the work floor.

Trip and Fall Hazards: A long, tangled chain of cords creates a trip hazard, which is one of the leading causes of workplace injuries.

Other Shock and Electrocution Risks: Every connection point between two cords is a weak link. These connections can easily pull apart, exposing live prongs and creating an immediate shock or electrocution hazard for any employee who touches them or steps on them with wet footwear.

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