WisCon Words of Wisdom

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April Awareness Topics

April 1: National Walking Day

April 5-11: Window Safety

April 6-12: Public Health

April 7: World Health Day

April 20-24: Work Zone Awareness

April 28: Workers' Memorial Day

All Month Long:

Distracted Driving Awareness

Safe Digging

Remembering Workers

Observed globally on April 28, Workers Memorial Day honors those who have lost their lives or been seriously injured on the job.

From April 20–24, OSHA is hosting memorial events and invites the public to visit their Workers Memorial Wall. Viewing the names and photos of these individuals puts the staggering scale of annual workplace fatalities into perspective.

As we remember those lost, let us recommit to creating safer, healthier environments—ensuring every employee returns home in the same condition they arrived, or better.

We want to hear from you!

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

Public Sector Consultation Services Return

WisCon has partnered with the WI Department of Health Services (DHS) to offer public sector consultation and training opportunities once again.

From now until June 30, 2026, WisCon is able to provide safety and health consultation services including:

- Telephone and "virtual" consultation
- On-site assessment of the workplace or job specific hazards with the purpose of providing recommendations to control potential exposures
- Training on safety and health topics including but not limited to:
  - Respiratory protection,
  - Infectious disease workplace planning,
  - Personal Protective Equipment,
  - Risk Assessments / Job Hazard Analysis,
  - Heat Stress,
  - Noise, and more.

For questions about public sector consultation please email us at publicsectorconsulting@slh.wisc.edu. To request services, please complete a Public Sector Consultation Services Request Form.

These services may continue past the end of the state fiscal year if grant funding becomes available for that time.

Trenching: Slope It, Shore It, Shield It

OSHA is focusing on reducing trenching and excavation hazards. Trench collapses, or cave-ins, pose a significant risk to workers' lives. To prevent cave-ins:

- SLOPE or bench trench walls at an angle inclined away from the excavation.
- SHORE trench walls by installing aluminum hydraulic or other types of supports to prevent soil movement.
- SHIELD trench walls with trench boxes or other types of supports to prevent soil cave-ins.

OSHA's Interpretation Letter on Recordability of Workplace Injury from Lithium-Ion Battery

Early this year the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued an interpretation letter covering a workplace injury caused by an employee carrying lithium-ion batteries for non-work-related use. The interpretation letter issued on January 20, 2026, provided responses to five questions posed by the employer as to whether the injury was recordable. Recordability of workplace injuries resulting from personal rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. | Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The employee carried the battery to power their e-cigarettes. The employee's lithium-ion battery had unprotected battery terminals which made contact with a work-related metal key that was also stored in the employee's pants pocket. This contact sparked a fire, resulting in the employee suffering an injury. The interpretation letter concluded that the event was recordable.

The employer's questions concerned:

- Work-relatedness as in did the event occur in the work environment
- The precipitating event – was the event the caused by the improper carrying of the battery or the fire
- Do either of the exceptions 1904.5(b)(2)(iv), eating, drinking or preparing food or drink or 1904.5(b)(2)(vi), personal grooming apply
- Is it a factor that the key that made contact with the battery terminals is a work key supplied by the employer?

One of the takeaways from this Interpretation letter is that the first eight exceptions listed in 1904.5(b)(2) are interpreted "narrowly" and that in order for the event to not be recordable, it needs to mirror one of these exceptions. [Question 3 response] Another takeaway concerns the potential hazards of lithium-ion batteries.

Working under the presumption that the employee did not wish to have their pants catch on fire, it could be that the hazards of the battery were not clearly communicated by the manufacturer and the employee was unaware of the battery's ability to start a fire. While communicating the potential hazards of non-work-related lithium-ion batteries may not be an employer's responsibility, communicating this information could prevent a similar workplace situation. The OSHA Fact Sheet - Lithium-ion Battery Safety and NFPA Lithium-ion Battery Safety documents may be helpful references for employees. Additionally, encouraging employees to read, understand and seek additional information from lithium-ion battery powered device manufacturers may also prevent a similar incident. (Links accessed 02/12/2026)

Musculoskeletal Disorders and Ergonomics

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries or pain affecting muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, and spinal discs, often caused by overuse, repetitive motion, or improper posture. They cause pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility, MSDs are caused by sudden or sustained force, vibration, repetitive motion, or awkward postures. They may be mild to intense and cause occasional to chronic pain.

Workplace Risks

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) can be caused or worsened by work conditions that require employees to:

- Lift, push, pull, or carry many or irregularly shaped objects
- Maintain awkward/unnatural postures
- Withstand cold temperatures
- Withstand vibrations from machinery and tools
- Increase the intensity, frequency, and duration of activities
- Endure psychosocial stressors
- Can be leading indicator for disability.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics, or human factors, is the scientific discipline of designing tasks, tools, and work environments to fit the user's physical and cognitive needs, minimizing injury risk (e.g., musculoskeletal disorders) and optimizing efficiency.

What can an Employer do?

An employer can put into practice an ergonomics program which is a systematic process for identifying, analyzing, and controlling workplace risk factors, often reducing MSDs.

Wisconsin Safety and Health Consultation Program

Phone: (800) 947-0553 | Email: wiscon@slh.wisc.edu

http://slh.wisc.edu/wiscon

WisCon Public Sector Consultation

Email: publicsectorconsulting@slh.wisc.edu

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