WisCon Words of Wisdom

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November Awareness Topics

November 1-7: Drowsy Driving Prevention

November 15: Remembrance of Road Traffic Victims

November 19: The Great American Smokeout®

Here Comes the Cold

We're smack dab in the middle of the "ber" months, and across Wisconsin, you know what that means: it's time to trade those colorful autumn views for freezing temperatures and snow. Before the first major freeze catches your operations off guard, now is the ideal time to get your shovels, salt supplies, and plows ready.

Winter is coming—and proactive property prep now goes a long way toward keeping your lots clear, walkways safe for employees and clients, and your business running smoothly all season long.

Quick Facility Prep Check:

- Stock up: Check de-icer and salt inventory before supplies run low.
- Inspect gear: Test plows, snowblowers, and outdoor lighting.
- Mark hazards: Set up plow stakes along curbs and walkways.

We want to hear from you!

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

Cold Weather Carbon Monoxide Awareness

As we enter the colder months, facilities are often buttoned up to retain heat. Reduced natural ventilation can allow carbon monoxide (CO) to accumulate, particularly in enclosed or poorly ventilated areas where fuel-burning equipment are operating.

Loading docks are one area of concern. Propane- and gasoline-powered forklifts can emit carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless, toxic gas produced by incomplete combustion. When dock doors are closed, reduced fresh-air exchange can allow CO concentrations to rise to hazardous levels. Even when doors are open, natural ventilation alone may not be sufficient to control exposure. Other potential areas of concern include spaces near forges, blast furnaces, and coke ovens, depending on the processes and ventilation systems in place.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning vary depending on the concentration and duration of exposure. Common symptoms include headache, fatigue, dizziness, drowsiness, nausea, chest pain or discomfort, and confusion. Because CO has no color or odor, workers may not realize they are being exposed until symptoms develop. High-level exposure can cause loss of consciousness or death.

To help protect workers, facilities should ensure adequate ventilation, maintain fuel-powered equipment, and assess the need for carbon monoxide monitoring in areas where exposure is possible. Anyone experiencing symptoms consistent with CO poisoning should immediately move to fresh air and seek emergency medical assistance. Establish protocols pertaining to safe re-entry.

Stay Alert, Stay Safe While Driving

As we "fall back" and transition out of daylight saving time, Drowsy Driving Prevention Week® (running November 1–7 this year) serves as a vital reminder from the National Sleep Foundation. Fatigue impairs judgment just like alcohol does—making awareness critical to keeping our roads safe.

When Danger Peaks According to NIOSH, the highest-risk windows for drowsy driving crashes are 4:00 – 6:00 a.m., midnight – 2:00 a.m., and 2:00 PM – 4:00 p.m.

Know the Warning Signs. Fatigue creeps up silently. Watch out for these red flags behind the wheel:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, or heavy eyelids
- Daydreaming or trouble remembering the last few miles driven
- Yawning repeatedly or rubbing your eyes
- Drifting across lane markers or hitting rumble strips

If you experience any of these warning signs, don't try to push through it. Pull over to a safe location —such as a rest stop, well-lit gas station, or public area—and take a power nap or rest before continuing your journey.

Optimizing Jobsite Lighting as Daylight Shortens

As daylight hours shorten, construction and field crews frequently need artificial lighting to maintain safety and productivity. Effective jobsite lighting helps workers identify hazards, navigate uneven surfaces, operate equipment, and perform precise tasks. A proactive lighting plan helps supervisors eliminate dark areas, control glare, and keep work routes safely illuminated.

Best Practices for Effective Jobsite Illumination

An effective lighting plan requires more than installing temporary work lights. Consider these practices:

1. **Identify High-Risk Areas First:** Prioritize lighting around excavations, stairways, accessways, loading zones, and routes used by vehicles and mobile equipment. Inspect these zones during actual shifts to catch shadows and poorly lit surfaces.
2. **Control Glare and Shadows:** Position light towers to avoid shining directly into workers' or equipment operators' eyes. Recheck placement whenever site layouts or material storage changes.
3. **Select Lighting for the Task:** Select fixtures based on light output, beam distribution, durability, power requirements, and suitability for outdoor conditions. Detailed work may require dedicated task lighting even when the surrounding area is well illuminated. Check that the selected fixtures provide adequate visibility without creating excessive glare or harsh contrasts.
4. **Verify Illumination Levels:** Measure light levels at work surfaces rather than relying solely on fixture wattage or advertised lumen output. OSHA's construction illumination provisions, 29 CFR 1926.26 and 1926.56, specify lighting requirements, including minimum levels of 5 foot-candles for general construction area lighting and 3 foot-candles for specified areas such as excavations and accessways. OSHA has proposed rescinding these provisions, but a proposal does not itself change the existing requirements. Verify current federal and applicable state-plan requirements before relying on specific thresholds and provide additional illumination where necessary for safe work.
5. **Manage Cords and Electrical Equipment:** Route temporary cables away from vehicle paths and walkways. Promptly address damaged cords, exposed conductors, and other electrical hazards.
6. **Plan for Power Interruptions:** Identify areas where a sudden loss of lighting creates safety hazards. Provide backup or emergency lighting as required by site risk assessments and ensure workers know how to report failures.
7. **Consider Worker Comfort and Shift Timing:** Choose lighting that minimizes harsh contrasts and visual fatigue. For overnight shifts, balance the visibility needed for safe work with the impact of bright light exposure on sleep schedules. Lighting choices should support visibility and task requirements without assuming that a daylight-like color temperature is best for every situation.

Maintaining Safe Operations Through the Darker Months

Shorter days do not automatically require reduced productivity, but they make advance planning more important. Before seasonal daylight changes affect a project, supervisors should inspect lighting equipment, identify areas that need additional coverage, verify illumination levels, and confirm that temporary electrical systems are in safe working condition.

Repeat these checks as work progresses, particularly when equipment moves, excavation areas expand, materials are relocated, or weather conditions change. Workers should also know how to report dark spots, damaged lights, exposed cables, and glare that interferes with visibility.

A well-planned lighting strategy supports safer movement and better visibility during work, helping field teams maintain safe and consistent operations throughout the year.

Resources

- OSHA — 29 CFR 1926.26: Illumination
- OSHA — 29 CFR 1926.56: Illumination requirements
- OSHA — Construction Illumination proposed rule

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