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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Hazards exist in every workplace in many different forms: sharp edges, falling objects, flying sparks, chemicals, noise and a myriad of other potentially dangerous situations.

When work practice and administrative controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, employers must provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to their employees and ensure its use.

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The Hazard Assessment

A first critical step in developing a comprehensive safety and health program is to identify physical and health hazards in the workplace. This process is known as a "hazard assessment." Potential hazards may be physical or health-related and a comprehensive hazard assessment should identify hazards in both categories. Examples of physical hazards include moving objects, fluctuating temperatures, high intensity lighting, rolling or pinching objects, electrical connections and sharp edges. Examples of health hazards include overexposure to harmful dusts, chemicals or radiation.

The hazard assessment should begin with a walk-through survey of the facility to develop a list of potential hazards in the following basic hazard categories:

- Impact
- Penetration
- Compression (roll-over)
- Chemical
- Heat/cold
- Harmful dust
- Light (optical) radiation
- Biologic

In addition to noting the basic layout of the facility and reviewing any history of occupational illnesses or injuries, things to look for during the walk-through survey include:

- Sources of electricity.
- Sources of motion such as machines or processes where movement may exist that could result in an impact between personnel and equipment.
- Sources of high temperatures that could result in burns, eye injuries or fire.
- Types of chemicals used in the workplace.
- Sources of harmful dusts.
- Sources of light radiation, such as welding, brazing, cutting, furnaces, heat treating, high intensity lights, etc.
- The potential for falling or dropping objects.
- Sharp objects that could poke, cut, stab or puncture.



AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY ASSOCIATION (ASA)

Patrick Prendiville; Administrator
24661 Del Prado, Suite 3, Dana Point, CA 92629
877-487-9696 office • 877-532-7238 fax
www.AutomotiveSafetyAssociation.com

Please direct all questions regarding the association to the administrative assistant, Judy Noecker

Judy@PrendivilleAgency.com

Hazard Assessment Continued

When the walk-through is complete, the employer should organize and analyze the data so that it may be efficiently used in determining the proper types of PPE required at the worksite. The employer should become aware of the different types of PPE available and the levels of protection offered. It is definitely a good idea to select PPE that will provide a level of protection greater than the minimum required to protect employees from hazards.

The workplace should be periodically reassessed for any changes in conditions, equipment or operating procedures that could affect occupational hazards. This periodic reassessment should also include a review of injury and illness records to spot any trends or areas of concern and taking appropriate corrective action. The suitability of existing PPE, including an evaluation of its condition and age, should be included in the reassessment.

Documentation of the hazard assessment is required through a written certification that includes the following information:

- Identification of the workplace evaluated
- Name of the person conducting the assessment
- Date of the assessment
- Identification of the document certifying completion of the hazard assessment.

Training

Employers are required to train each employee who must use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Employees must be trained to know at least the following:

- When PPE is necessary and When PPE is necessary
- How to properly put on, take off, adjust and wear the PPE
- The limitations of the PPE
- Proper care, maintenance, useful life and disposal of PPE

Document the training of each employee by preparing a certification containing the name of the employee trained, the date of the training and a clear identification of the subject matter. (see page 3)

Employer Responsibilities:

- Perform a “hazard assessment” of the workplace
- Identify and provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for employees or ensure that employees provide appropriate PPE for themselves
- Train employees in the use and care of the PPE
- Maintain PPE, including replacing worn or damaged PPE and ensure that the employees replace any worn or damaged PPE they own
- Periodically review, update and evaluate the effectiveness of the PPE program

Employee Responsibilities:

- Properly wear PPE
- Attend training sessions on PPE
- Care for, clean and maintain PPE
- Inform management of need to repair or replace PPE Hazard Assessment

References: OSHA 3151-12R 2003
MySafetyPoint Technical Bulletin

For more information on this, and other health related issues affecting workers, visit OSHA's
Web site at www.osha.gov and
MySafetyPoint at www.MYSafetyPoint.com

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