JULY 2017

Automotive Safety Association

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Helping to make your workplace a safe place
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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

Protecting Workers from Effects of Heat

Now that summer is upon us it is a good time to review your Injury and Illness Prevention plan to ensure it addresses Heat Illness Prevention. Studies show effective reduction of heat illness depends on written procedures, access to water, access to cooler areas, acclimatization and weather monitoring, emergency response and employee and supervisor training. High temperature and humidity; direct sun or heat; limited air movement; physical exertion; poor physical condition; some medicines; inadequate tolerance for hot workplaces; and insufficient water intake can all lead to heat stress.

Health & Safety in the Workplace

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. (See page 2)

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What kind of heat disorders and health effects are possible and how should they be treated?

• **Heat Stroke** is the most serious heat related disorder and occurs when the body's temperature regulation fails and body temperature rises to critical levels. It is a medical emergency that may result in death. The primary signs and symptoms of heat stroke are confusion; irrational behavior; loss of consciousness; convulsions; a lack of sweating (usually); hot, dry skin; and an abnormally high body temperature. If a worker shows signs of possible heat stroke, professional medical treatment should be obtained immediately. Until professional medical treatment is available, the worker should be placed in a shady, cool area and the outer clothing should be removed. Douse the worker with cool water and circulate air to improve evaporative cooling. Provide the worker fluids (preferably water) as soon as possible.

• **Heat Exhaustion** is only partly due to exhaustion; it is a result of the combination of excessive heat and dehydration. Signs and symptoms are headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, thirst, and giddiness. Fainting or heat collapse is often associated with heat exhaustion. Workers suffering from heat exhaustion should be removed from the hot environment and given fluid replacement. They should also be encouraged to get adequate rest, and when possible, ice packs should be applied.

• **Heat Cramps** are usually caused by performing hard physical labor in a hot environment. Heat cramps have been attributed to an electrolyte imbalance caused by sweating and are normally caused by the lack of water replenishment. It is imperative that workers in hot environments drink water every 15 to 20 minutes and also drink carbohydrate-electrolyte replacement liquids (e.g., sports drinks) to help minimize physiological disturbances during recovery.

• **Heat Rashes** are the most common problem in hot work environments where the skin is persistently wetted by unevaporated sweat. Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. It is more likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts, and in elbow creases. The best treatment for heat rash is to provide a cooler, less humid environment. Keep the affected area dry. Dusting powder may be used to increase comfort, but avoid using ointments or creams—they keep the skin warm and moist and may make the condition worse.

Information attained from MySafetyPoint.com technical Bulletin

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Common Workplace Injuries

• **Back and other musculoskeletal injuries** result from lifting heavy objects and working in awkward postures when disassembling and prepping vehicles.
• **Slip and fall injuries** are frequently caused by poor housekeeping or unclear pathways
• **Eye injuries** are frequently caused by particles that impact unprotected eyes
• **Respiratory (lung) diseases** like work-related asthma result from exposure to the isocyanates present in polyurethane-based coatings, linings, and paints.

How can you prevent these injuries in your shop?

As an employer, you should periodically reassess the workplace for changes in conditions, equipment or operating procedures so you remain one step ahead of a potential hazardous situation.
Talk to your employees about the most frequent and costly injuries experienced in your shop. Get their input on what they think might hurt them on the job, and then ask them what could be changed to prevent those injuries. When employees participate in ways to prevent injuries, they are much more likely to comply with changes you might make.

Prevent back and other musculoskeletal injuries:

- Use rolling work stands so workers avoid having to bend over to pick up tools.
- Use pads on fenders or body so workers can lean on the car when working towards the middle of the vehicle.
- Avoid placing heavy parts on the ground if they're going to be re-installed. Hang them up around or on the lift, using a device like a Tire Hanger.
- Ask for help with big, heavy or awkward parts.

Prevent slip & fall injuries:

- Clean floors and work surfaces as soon as they become wet.
- Place warning signs in wet floor areas and remove them promptly when the floor is clean and dry.
- Keep passageways clear at all times, and mark permanent aisles and passageway.
- During wet or oily processes, maintain drainage and provide false floors, platforms, or nonslip mats. (False floors are elevated floors usually 2 to 4 inches above the structural floor designed to provide a surface for safe transit).

Prevent eye injuries:

- Develop an eye protection use policy.
- Work with your employees to find eye protection that works for them and offers adequate protection, including top and side protection.
- Enforce the use of eye protection by your employees whenever they are on the shop floor.

Prevent work-related asthma:

- Provide extended cuff nitrile gloves, chemical resistant shoot suits, headsocks, and other coverings. No exposed skin should come into contact with catalysts, hardeners, or mixed coating and paint products.
- Catalyst and hardener spills should be cleaned up promptly and any exposed skin should be washed thoroughly. The hardener does not evaporate and can move to other shop areas from contaminated hands and footwear.
- A supplied air respirator is the best choice for protecting workers. However, the compressor and other associated equipment must be properly maintained and must deliver sufficient uncontaminated air.

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