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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

Fundamentals of a Workplace First-Aid Program

In a perfect world we would never have the need to utilize our knowledge of administering first aid. Since we all know a perfect world only exists on the big screen, we hope you will use this newsletter as a reminder to make sure your first aid program is up-to-date.

First aid is emergency care provided for injury or sudden illness before emergency medical treatment is available. The first-aid provider in the workplace is someone who is trained in the delivery of initial medical emergency procedures, using a limited amount of equipment to perform a primary assessment and intervention while awaiting arrival of emergency medical service (EMS) personnel. The outcome of occupational illnesses and injuries depends on the severity of the injury, available first-aid care and medical treatment. Prompt, properly administered first aid may mean the difference between rapid or prolonged recovery, temporary or permanent disability, and even life or death.

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A workplace first-aid program is part of a comprehensive safety and health management system that includes the following four essential elements:

- Identifying and assessing the workplace risks that have potential to cause worker injury or illness.
- Designing and implementing a workplace first-aid program
- Instructing all workers about the first-aid program, including what workers should do if a coworker is injured or ill. Putting the policies and program in writing is recommended to implement this and other program elements.
- Providing for scheduled evaluation and changing of the first-aid program to keep the program current and applicable to emerging risks in the workplace, including regular assessment of the adequacy of the first-aid training course.

Policies and procedures should be communicated to all employees, including those workers who may not read or speak English. Language barriers should be addressed both in instructing employees on first-aid policies and procedures and when designating individuals who will receive first-aid training and become the on-site first-aid providers

It is advised that the first-aid program for a particular workplace be designed to reflect the known and anticipated risks of the specific work environment. When developing a workplace first-aid program, consultation with the local fire and rescue service or emergency medical professionals may be helpful for response time information and other program issues. The first-aid program should be reviewed periodically to determine if it continues to address the needs of the specific workplace.

Training, supplies, equipment and first-aid policies should be added or modified to account for changes in workplace safety and health hazards, worksite locations and worker schedules since the last program review.

The first-aid training program should be kept up-to-date with current first-aid techniques and knowledge. Outdated training and reference materials should be replaced or removed.



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FIRST AID INSTRUCTIONS

In all cases requiring emergency medical treatment, immediately call, or have a co-worker call, to request emergency medical assistance.

WOUNDS:

Minor: Cuts, lacerations, abrasions, or punctures

- Wash the wound using soap and water; rinse it well.
- Cover the wound using clean dressing.

Major: Large, deep and bleeding

- Stop the bleeding by pressing directly on the wound, using a bandage or cloth.
- Keep pressure on the wound until medical help arrives.

BROKEN BONES:

- Do not move the victim unless it is *absolutely necessary*.
- If the victim *must* be moved, "splint" the injured area. Use a board, cardboard, or rolled newspaper as a splint.

BURNS:

Thermal (Heat):

- Rinse the burned area, without scrubbing it, and immerse it in cold water; do not use ice water.
- Blot dry the area and cover it using sterile gauze or a clean cloth.

Chemical:

- Flush the exposed area with cool water immediately for 15 to 20 minutes.

EYE INJURY:

Small particles

- Do not rub your eyes.
- Use the corner of a soft clean cloth to draw particles out, or hold the eyelids open and flush the eyes continuously with water.

Large or stuck particles

- If a particle is stuck in the eye, do not attempt to remove it.
- Cover both eyes with bandage.

Chemical

- Immediately irrigate the eyes and under the eyelids, with water, for 30 minutes.

NECK AND SPINE INJURY:

- If the victim appears to have injured his or her neck or spine, or is unable to move his or her arm or leg, do not attempt to move the victim unless it is absolutely necessary.

HEAT EXHAUSTION:

- Loosen the victim's tight clothing.
- Give the victim "sips" of cool water.
- Make the victim lie down in a cooler place with the feet raised.

First-Aid Supplies

It is advisable for the employer to give a specific person the responsibility for choosing the types and amounts of first-aid supplies and for maintaining these supplies.

The supplies must be adequate, should reflect the kinds of injuries that occur, and must be stored in an area where they are readily available for emergency access. An automated external defibrillator (AED) should be considered when selecting first-aid supplies and equipment.

A specific example of the minimal contents of a workplace first aid kit is described in American National Standards Institute ANSI Z308.1 - 2003, *Minimum Requirements for Workplace First Aid Kits*.

The kits described are suitable for small businesses. For large operations, employers should determine how many first-aid kits are needed, and if it is appropriate to augment the kits with additional first-aid equipment and supplies.

Employers who have unique or changing first-aid needs should consider upgrading their first-aid kits. The employer can use the OSHA 300 log, OSHA 301 reports or other records to identify the first-aid supply needs of their worksite.

Consultation with the local fire and rescue service or emergency medical professionals may be beneficial. By assessing the specific needs of their workplaces, employers can ensure the availability of adequate first-aid supplies.

NOW is a good time to take a look at your first aid kit and safety program.
Are you ready for an emergency??

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