5 Obstacles to a Safe Workplace

A safe workplace is what everyone wants; however, many people unknowingly contribute to making it unsafe for themselves and others.

HOW? Here are five obstacles to a safe workplace:

1. **Distractions:** Mobile devices, loud noises, chatting with coworkers — all of these distractions can take you away from the task at hand and lead to injury. Always keep your mind and eyes on the job. Take all of your available breaks.

2. **Clutter:** Slips, trips, falls — all of them can happen if there are clutter and obstructions in pathways.

3. **Taking shortcuts:** Avoid skipping steps — make it a habit to perform each task thoroughly. Most accidents happen when people skip important steps and are in a hurry.

4. **Complacency:** A complacent mindset often leads to overconfidence. When working a repetitive job or performing a routine task, your mind may wander, leading to injury because of inattention.

5. **Lack of planning:** If you have a tedious task, planning and following the steps are pertinent. Not having the correct tools, proper lighting or proper safety equipment can lead to disaster.

Create a safer workplace for you and your coworkers by eliminating these common factors that could lead to workplace injury.

**SAFETY CORNER**

National School Bus Safety Week is October 18 to 22.

**At the Bus Stop**

Now that children are back in school, bus safety needs to be on everyone’s minds, especially at the bus stop. Here are some safety reminders:

- **ARRIVE** at the bus stop at least five minutes early.
- **STAND** at least three giant steps away from the curb — no running or playing. *Tip*: Keep your child occupied with a game of “I Spy” or the alphabet game while you wait.
- **WAIT** until the bus comes to a complete stop and the driver opens the door and says it’s okay to enter before approaching the bus.
- **NEVER** let a child walk behind a bus. If children need to cross the street, they should cross ten feet (five giant steps) in front of the bus. Tell them to make eye contact with the driver.
- **TELL** children not to pick up a dropped object until they tell the driver they are doing so — bus drivers have limited visibility.

**CAUTION: Overexertion**

Overexertion is one of the leading causes of injuries in construction and other manual jobs. Overexertion can cause muscle, tendon or ligament tears and pulls.

Here are some tips to help prevent this type of injury:

- **Get** help or use a forklift, dolly or other equipment when a load is too heavy to lift.
- **Don’t** stay in a bent or awkward position for prolonged periods.
- **Take** a break when you feel fatigued. Listen to your body.
- **Raise** work to waist-high level so your body stays in its natural position while performing a task.
- **Maintain** your tools so they do the work instead of your body.
- **Take** microbreaks of ten to 20 seconds to arch your back and stretch your muscles.

**October is Animal Safety and Protection Month.**

Keep your dogs on leashes in public places.

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*Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](http://coronavirus.gov).*
Avoid Gasoline Gaffes

Did you know that gasoline vapors are flammable, heavier than air and can travel long distances to ignition sources? Be careful that you remain outdoors and away from any possible ignition sources when refueling with gas.

Here are some other precautions:

- **Shut down engines** and allow equipment to cool down before refueling.
- **Never smoke**, light matches or lighters, generate sparks or other sources of ignition near fuel storage and handling areas.
- **Wear safety glasses** when handling gas to avoid splashes to eyes.
- **Clean up spills immediately**, using absorbent materials, such as rags, paper or sawdust. Dispose of cleanup materials in a safe container.
- **Wash your skin** with soap and water if it makes contact with gas.
- **Never use gas** as a cleaning agent.
- **Store gasoline in an appropriate container** with a tight seal. Never store it in a glass or non-reusable plastic container. Keep the container at least 50 feet away from heat sources, including the sun, furnace or other equipment.
- **Keep storage tanks outside** the home — in a shed or detached garage, and out of the reach of children.

Demolition DOS and DON'TS

Demolition work often encompasses the same safety hazards as construction work. Here are some dos and don'ts when it comes to protecting yourself and coworkers:

**DO** wear appropriate PPE for the job.

**DO** get a written engineering survey if you are planning on demolishing a building or home to check if it is structurally safe.

**DO** shut off electrical power, gas, water and other service lines before beginning work — notify utility companies ahead of time.

**DO** determine if any flammable, explosive or other hazardous materials exist on-site before beginning work.

**DO** use canopies on entrances to multistory structures to prevent debris from hitting someone.

**DON'T** start at the bottom on multilevel structures; work from the top down. Alert others that work is taking place above them.

**DON'T** allow wall sections, one story or higher, to stand alone without bracing or support.

**DON'T** remove structural or load-supporting walls until all stories above have been removed.

**DON'T** forget to post warning signs at each level, alerting others of falling materials hazards.

**DON'T** enter a work area where equipment is performing demolition unless you are the person working with the equipment.

National Fire Prevention Week is October 3 to 9.

Fire Prevention Basics

**Install** smoke alarms on every level of your house. Test them every month.

**Replace** your smoke alarm batteries every six months.

**Create** a family fire escape plan and practice it twice a year.

**Extinguish** all candles and fires before leaving the area and turn off space heaters when not in use.

**Remove** lint from the dryer after every use.

**Never** leave cooking food unattended.

**Replace** damaged or worn electrical cords.

**Inspect** your chimney yearly and clean if necessary.