



Region IV e-News



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Is Your Company Ready for the Pandemic Flu?

With the recent outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus and the upcoming flu season, subject experts are predicting that a pandemic flu event is now a matter of when – not if – this will occur. Many believe pandemic flu will strike this fall and winter. Has your company planned for this yet? If not, OSHA offers several resources which are available on the OSHA web page at https://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html . Even if your company has a continuity plan, it is a good idea to check the information on the web page to ensure that you have addressed everything. Another good source for information can be found at <http://www.flu.gov/> .



Protect Workers in Hot Weather!

Even towards the end of summer and early fall, high temperatures and high humidity levels can create severe health hazards for outdoor workers. Employers who have employees working in hot weather need to have a plan to address these hazards. This plan should include work/rest policies, ensuring that employees drink an adequate amount of water and the ability to contact emergency medical services if an employee is showing symptoms of heat stress or heat stroke. For more information, please visit the OSHA web site at https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=18131 .

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Photo of the Quarter

Improper Modification of a Forklift Creates Hazardous Conditions

Description: Photo shows an old fire extinguisher that has been retrofitted to be used to hold LP gas for a forklift.

Hazard: Employees could be exposed to fire and explosion hazards.

Related Standards: 29 CFR 1910.178(a)(4) - modifications or additions to powered industrial trucks must be approved, in writing, by the manufacturer. 29 CFR 1910.178(q)(5) - All parts shall be replaced with only equivalent safe parts. 29 CFR 1910.178(q)(6) - Parts shall not be altered so that the relative positions of the various parts are different from what they were when received by the manufacturer. 29 CFR 1910.178(p)(1) - If a truck is found to be in need of repair, defective or in any way unsafe, the truck shall be taken out of service.

Corrective Action: The employer took the forklift out of service.





Lightning Strikes

By: Powell McDonald, Assistant Area Director,
Fort Lauderdale OSHA Area Office

“Summertime, and the living is easy.” So begins the lyrics to George Gershwin’s familiar song **Summertime**. This brings to mind memories of pleasant summer afternoons filled with picnics, iced tea, fishing, and softball games. Yet summer also brings with it the deadly hazard of lightning strikes. As storm clouds gather in the sky on a summer day, an electrical imbalance results between the clouds and the earth. This imbalance increases until a bolt of lightning races from the clouds to the earth in an instant. Lightning bolts can produce more than 30 million volts and more than 250,000 amps. which can prove devastating to anyone who happens to be in the wrong place.

Outdoor workers are in danger of suffering lightning strikes unless precautions are taken. Just in Region IV since 2005, OSHA has investigated 10 fatalities where workers were struck by lightning. Two employees were struck by lightning from a nearby storm while pressure cleaning the roof of a house in Miramar, Florida. One of them was killed. A farm worker digging a ditch in Clewiston, Florida, was killed when lightning struck the ground near him. Three employees in Arcadia, Florida, were trimming limbs from a palm tree as a storm approached. One of the workers was killed when he took refuge under a large oak tree which was struck by lightning. A construction worker in Wesley Chapel, Florida, was struck and killed by lightning while retrieving a nail gun from the roof of a house.

Employers are required to provide a safe workplace. To do this employers must develop a safety program that provides guidelines and tools for assessing the potential for a lightning strike, outline the steps the employees are to take to protect themselves from lightning, and provide training for employees in the application of those guidelines and steps. The National Lightning Safety Institute (NLSI) provides criteria for a comprehensive lightning safety program for outdoor workers at the following website: http://www.lightningsafety.com/nlsi_pls/outdoor_workers.html.

Mercury Exposure From Broken Lamps and Light Bulbs

By: Marcelina Santiago, PhD, Industrial Hygienist, Fort Lauderdale Area Office

Mercury (Hg) is an essential component of fluorescent lamps. Unfortunately, Hg is a hazardous material, and exposure to it has been attributed to insomnia, irritability, dyspnea, stomatitis and “Mad Hatters Disease”. As a result of this, OSHA has established an acceptable ceiling concentration of $1\text{mg}/10\text{m}^3$ for Hg in all of its different forms, including elemental mercury, inorganic mercury (combined with other elements; mainly oxygen, sulfur and chlorine) or organic mercury (combined with carbon or carbon containing compounds).



Employee disposing of fluorescent light bulbs.

In December of 2008, a referral was received by the OSHA Fort Lauderdale area office about possible employee exposures to mercury at a lamp and light bulb wholesaler. The area office immediately scheduled an inspection at the facility. When the compliance officer arrived at the facility, an employee was observed removing broken light bulbs and lamps from their original packaging and putting them in a 55 gallon drum labeled “hazardous waste”. When finished, the employee would shake the box to ensure all pieces had fallen into the drum. The employee wore a dust mask, safety glasses, and gloves.

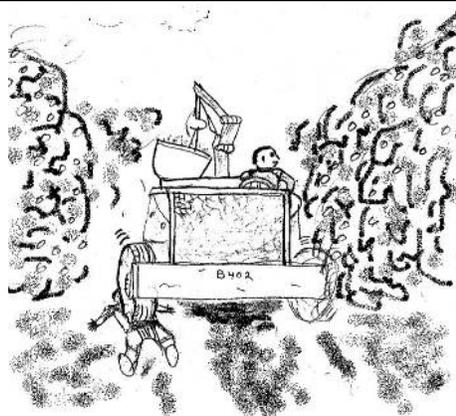
The CSHO sampled for mercury vapor and particulates. Results showed that the employee was not exposed to excessive levels of mercury vapor, however, high levels of mercury particulates were found on the employee’s arms. Additionally, the table near the employee, where the boxes of broken bulbs were placed, was found to contain mercury. Citations were issued for possible mercury ingestion hazards and skin absorption hazards. Through the employee interviews it was determined that the employer had not trained the employees to recognize the hazards of Hg exposure or how to protect themselves from the exposure.

Citations issued to the employer included not providing personal protective equipment to cover the employee’s arms, (29 CFR 1910.132(a)), allowing the consumption of food in the mercury contamination area, (29 CFR 1910.141(g)(2)), and not training the employees on the hazards posed by the Hg vapor (29 CFR 1910.1200(h)). Now the employer has established procedures which include wearing protective clothing to cover the employee’s arms, gloves, a dust mask, and safety glasses when handling the broken bulbs. The employer also has trained the employees on the hazards of working with Hg vapor, and has prohibited the consumption of food or beverages in the area where mercury contamination is present. Without these changes, employees could have potentially developed symptoms to their mercury exposure.

Fatal Fact 23

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Accident Type: Struck -by
Weather Conditions: High 80's and clear
Type of Company: Harvesting and Hauling
Crew Size: 85
Union or Nonunion: Non-Union
Worksite Inspections Conducted: No
Designated Competent Person on Site: The site crew leader
Employer Safety and Health Program in Effect:
Training and Education for Employees: Yes
Craft of Deceased Employee: Laborer
Age/Sex: 59 year old male
Time on Job: 4 days
Time on the Project: 1 day



Brief Description of Accident

Employees were harvesting oranges in a grove. The employer provided a high-lift (a school bus that was converted to a work truck for harvesting oranges (also referred to as a "goat")) that was operated in the grove area between the rows of orange trees. A goat operator, who was the crew leader, and one employee were working in a row that was approximately 10 feet wide. The employee was observed on the right side of the goat (the width was 8 feet at the widest point) standing next to a ladder that was leaning against a tree when the crew leader proceeded forward through the row of oranges. The goat operator collected two tubs of oranges, one was emptied into the goat container and another was placed at the rear right side of the vehicle. The goat operator decided to drive the goat to the main road to deliver the oranges to the designated drop off location. He proceeded in reverse and sensed that something had been run over by the right front tire. The goat operator stepped down from the equipment and observed the employee positioned under the right front tire. The employee did not regain consciousness.

Accident Prevention Recommendations

The employer shall ensure goats and other vehicular equipment are provided with a back-up alarm to alert employee the equipment is being operated in reverse. The equipment must have rear and side view mirrors to enhance the operator's visibility of crew members in the grove areas especially when working between the rows.

Sources of Help:

OSHA Standards (Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1910) include all OSHA job safety and health rules and regulations covering general industry, and may be purchased from the Government Printing Office, phone (202) 512-1800, and fax (202) 512-2250.

OSHA-funded free onsite consultation services are available in all states, and their contact information can be found on OSHA's Internet World Wide Web site at: <http://www.osha.gov/>.

Courses relative to hazards in general industry are offered by the OSHA Training Institute, 2020 South Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, IL 60005-4102; phone (847) 297-4810.

OSHA regulations, documents and technical information also are available on CD-ROM, which may be purchased from the Government Printing Office, phone (202) 512-1800 or fax (202) 512-2250. That information also is on OSHA's Internet World Wide Web site at: <http://www.osha.gov/>.

NOTE: The case that is described here was selected as being representative of fatalities that are caused by improper work practices. No special emphasis or priority is implied, nor is the case necessarily a recent occurrence. The legal aspects of the incident have been resolved, and the case is now closed.