Safety Talk

JULY 2023

Fire Safety for Vacant and Under-Utilized Buildings

When a building is vacant or unoccupied, property owners should be aware of numerous risks, including fire. Fire risk management is crucial to ensure the safety and security of the property, nearby buildings, and the surrounding area. Property owners should consider the following essential fire safety measures.

- Enhance Security Measures for Under-Utilized Buildings:

  - Vacant buildings can be a "bullseye" for arsonists. To mitigate unauthorized entry, owners and property management should consider installing strong locking mechanisms and locks on all forms of entry, including windows and doors.

  - Invest in security camera equipment which allows owners to monitor property on a regular basis.

- Conduct Regular Inspections of the Vacant Property:

  - Regular inspections of unoccupied buildings can help identify potential fire hazards, electrical hazards, and any damage due to unauthorized entry.

- Fire Extinguishers and Fire Prevention Maintenance:

  - Ensure fire extinguishers and fire prevention systems are operating correctly.

  - Ensure fire extinguishers are inspected monthly and annually.

  - Ensure fire extinguishers are properly identified.

Another big part of effective risk management also includes ensuring that you have adequate insurance coverage for vacant buildings. Communicate with your county's risk manager or the equivalent to ensure they know if a building is vacant or under-utilized.

Roadway Mowing Safety

Highway crews mow along roadways to keep our county roads visible and neat in appearance. However, while mowing roadways and ditches extra caution is needed to prevent the potential for accidents. Listed below are safety tips for increasing mowing safety when mowing along roadways.

Potential Hazards:

- Rollover hazards from wet conditions and steep slopes or ditches.
- Thrown objects from mower blades.
- Potential of severed body limbs.
- Potential for electrocution when mowing near power lines.

Pre-Trip Inspection:

- Perform daily inspections before operating any mowing equipment.
- Make sure the mower is off when performing inspections.
- Make sure all lights work and that they are clean and visible.
- Make sure all warning triangles are clean and visible.
- Check tires for wear and ensure that they are inflated to the recommended PSI.
- Ensure that all wheel lug nuts are tight.
- Look for hydraulic and fuel leaks. Do not operate the mower if you have any fluid leaks. Hydraulic fluid and fuel leaks can cause a potential fire hazard.
- Check cutting blades and knives for any damage and make sure they are secure.
- All mower decks should be equipped with safety shielding. Either rubber or chain type shielding.
- Clean windows and make sure wipers are functional.

Mowing Safety Tips:

- Wear recommended PPE such as hard hats, gloves, hearing protection, boots and high visibility vests.
- Make sure operators have been trained on the equipment that they are assigned to.
- Use 3 points of contact when entering and exiting the cab of mowers.
- Before you mow in an area, inspect the area for debris such as chunks of concrete, utility cables, power lines, tree stumps, chains, telephone junction boxes and gas lines.
- Maintain 10 ft from any fixed item or other potential hazardous objects.
- Always wear seat belts when operating mowers.
- Older cabs should be equipped with Roll Over Protective Structures (ROPS).
- Drive forward down slopes, and back up; two-wheel drive tractors are more susceptible to rear overturn when driving up a slope.
- Ensure warning signs are posted in mowing areas. It may be necessary to move signs as you are mowing or having a mobile crew follow all mowing activities.
- Avoid mowing ANY slope with a tractor that is more than 11 degrees.
- Know the limits of your equipment.

Hierarchy of Hazard Controls

What is the Hierarchy of Controls?
The hierarchy of controls is a method of identifying and ranking safeguards to protect workers from hazards. They are arranged from the most effective to the least effective and include elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment.

Elimination - makes sure the hazard no longer exists. **Examples:**

- Ending the use of a hazardous material
- Doing work at ground level rather than at dangerous heights

Substitution - means changing out a material or process to reduce the hazard.
Examples:

- Switching to a less hazardous material
- Switching to machinery that provides more effective guarding

Engineering Controls - reduce exposure by preventing hazards from coming into contact with workers.
Examples:

- Noise enclosures
- Local exhaust ventilation

Administrative Controls - changes the way work is done or provides more information to workers.
Examples:

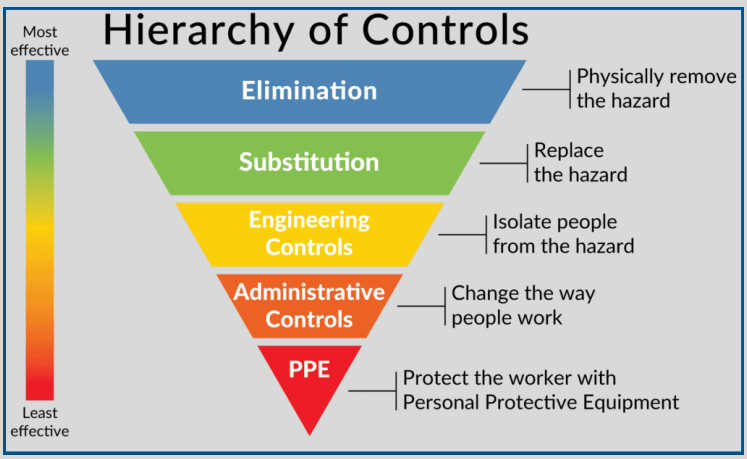
- Procedures, such as equipment inspections, planned preventive maintenance, checklists, lockout/tagout.
- Training on topics such as hazard communication, permit-required confined space entry, and safe work procedures.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - includes clothing and devices to protect workers. PPE needs constant effort and attention (including proper use and training) from workers. **Examples:**

- Safety glasses
- Hard hats
- Fall Protection
- Hearing Protection
- Protective Clothing

How Can You Use the Hierarchy of Controls?
First you will need to identify the hazard(s) you are trying to control and include workers and their input when deciding which controls will be the most effective.

Then, think about how you can block the path between the worker and the hazard. Brainstorm ways the hazard can be eliminated, substituted, engineered out, administratively controlled, or what PPE can be used with other controls.



Sun Protection

At some point, we've all been burned by the sun. Sunburn is the effect of ultraviolet (UV) radiation on the skin. UV light beams down on us every day. But now there's less protective ozone in the atmosphere and the risk of exposure has increased. UV rays are more powerful than visible light rays. They're so powerful that they can cause cancer. Sunlight is the main source of UV radiation known to damage the skin and cause skin cancer. Exposure to the sun's UV radiation is a highly preventable cause of skin cancer. The more time you spend in the sun without UV protection, the higher your risk becomes of developing skin cancer. Melanoma is the least common but most dangerous type of skin cancer.

When you work in the sun, especially in the spring and summer, you need to minimize the hazards of UV exposure.

To minimize the dangers:

- Wear a shirt and long pants to cover most of your skin. Tightly woven material will offer more protection. Wet clothing loses some of its ability to block out the sun's rays.
- Protect any exposed skin with sunscreen. Don't forget your ears and the back of your neck. Use an SPF of 30 or higher and apply it 20 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours or as often as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Use a UV-blocking lip balm and reapply every two hours. Skin cancer can develop on the lips.
- Protect your eyes. Wear UV-absorbent safety glasses (e.g., CSA-approved polycarbonate glasses) or safety sunglasses. Even clear safety glasses will decrease your UV exposure.
- Find a shaded area for your breaks and lunch. • SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor. Multiply the SPF by 10 to know how many minutes you can stay in the sun without burning.
- Examine your skin regularly for any unusual changes such as a spot on the skin that is changing size, shape, or color.
- Sunscreen should be standard equipment for anyone working outdoors during spring and summer months. Keep a bottle handy in your toolbox.

JULY 2023 QUIZ

TRUE or FALSE

1. Employees should be involved when identifying hazards in the workplace and they should be involved in implementing solutions to hazardous situations.
2. Vacant buildings should not be protected from fire or unauthorized entry.
3. PPE is at the top of the Hierarchy of Controls.
4. When getting into a tractor to mow, two points of contact are sufficient.
5. SPF stand for Strong Pickle Form.

Answers

1. True 2. False 3. False 4. False 5. False