

Safety Talk

SEPTEMBER 2023



THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH-VISIBILITY CLOTHING

Anyone in county employment that can reasonably expect to work on or next to a roadway should wear high-visibility clothing. It is industry standard and is a simple, yet a vital tool to prevent injury or death. Not wearing high-visibility clothing is foolish and will eventually get you harmed. Be seen and not hit!

Below are several reasons to wear high-visibility clothing:

1. It enhances visibility – Be seen and not hit!
2. High-visibility clothes give drivers more time to react-Be seen and not hit!
3. High-visibility clothing improves work efficiency at night. Workers can see each other easier and it really catches driver's attention.
4. High-visibility clothing combats distractions. It catches drivers' attention and alerts them to your presence.
5. It meets ANSI safety standards, thereby adding to workers' safety.
6. It encourages a safety-first mindset. The first step to safety is to actually think about it. Wearing high-visibility clothing is a great reminder.
7. High-visibility clothing promotes a professional identity. You are dressing the part of the professional you are.



BUILDING SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Most school and county administrators know they must comply with Federal and State (TOSHA) safety regulations. These required safety regulations are designed to keep our employees and students safe from potential hazards. In addition to safety regulations, our schools and county buildings should also be on the lookout for obvious physical hazards that could cause an injury to our students or employees. One way to avoid compliance violations and physical hazards is to perform regular in-house inspections of your buildings. Listed below are safety/regulation items that should be inspected.

Consider the following monthly inspections:

Fire Prevention:

- Are fire extinguishers inspected monthly?
- Are fire extinguishers properly mounted to walls?
- Is the pressure needle in the green?
- Are Exit signs operating and inspected monthly?

Sprinkler System:

- Are annual inspections with tags attached to main risers?
- Is the system free of water leaks?
- Are risers free of obstructions by 36 inches?
- Do sprinkler heads have 18 inch clearance?

Boiler/Electrical/Water Heater Rooms:

- Are rooms free of clutter and not used for storage?
- Are annual inspections performed on boilers?
- Are there any water leaks that need to be reported?
- Are valves in good condition and is equipment free of rust?

Electrical Inspection:

- Is equipment free of exposed wires?
- Are outlet/switch plate covers in place?
- Are breaker panels not blocked by storage items? (3ft. of clearance)
- Are breaker panel doors closed?
- Are there open/exposed breaker circuits?

Hazard Communication:

- Are Safety Data Sheets on file for all chemicals?
- Are all chemical containers properly labeled?

Slip/Trip/Fall Hazards:

- Are caution signs posted during mopping procedures?
- Is the building free of slip/trip/fall hazards in walkways, sidewalks, stairs etc..?

Ceiling Tiles:

Are ceiling tiles in place to prevent the spread of smoke and fire?

WATER HEATER INSPECTION

Water heaters are essential to any county building or school. They provide us with hot water whenever we need it. However, it's a complex system and a lot of things can go wrong with the tank if it's not properly serviced. Water heaters are constantly working, so if they aren't examined from time to time, they can develop issues that can result in repairs or a complete replacement. Not only can water heater inspections extend the life of a water heater, it is also a great safety measure. Some water heater issues like leaks can be dangerous; if water comes in to contact with anything electrical or water develops into mold, this can be very dangerous to you and your employees. Listed below are tips to help you extend the life of your water heater and to reduce the potential for safety hazards.

Water Heater Safety Tips:

- Visually inspect your water heater monthly. If you notice a leak or rusty valves, repair those issues as soon as possible.
- Common locations for leaks include: At the floor level, under the water heater, under and around the relief valve and, at the piping to and from the water heater.
- Flush water tanks once or twice a year. Flushing out debris removes build up and improves the efficiency. Be sure to turn off both water and power to the water heater before attempting a flush.
- Test pressure relief valves. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Opening it will allow water to flow out. If it's not functioning properly, get it replaced.
- Ensure the cold water and hot water shut off valves are functional.
- Water heaters should be equipped with drip pans to reduce the potential for flooding.
- If you have a gas water heater, avoid using tape to repair gas vent pipe connections. They should be repaired with sheet metal and sheet metal screws.
- Ensure electrical wiring is in good condition and enclosed.
- Electric water heater supply conduit should not touch metal water pipes.
- Gas water heaters may require additional inspections and cleaning of the burner and the ports for safe operation.
- A carbon monoxide detector should be installed in boiler rooms or closets that are equipped with gas water heaters.



Inspect Your Water Heater

SAFETY TRAINING IMPORTANCE

Workplace accidents and injuries predominately relate back to one common root cause: lack of proper safety training. Proper safety training doesn't just help you and your county remain compliant. Safety training also helps employees gain an understanding of how to identify hazards and address them before incidents occur. Hazards can be found in all workplace environments. The better prepared and trained an employee is in recognizing hazards, the more likely they will remain safe at work; being able to be more productive in a safe environment.

There's a bigger risk.

When thinking about safety training, it's not just about the cost of the actual training or the time it takes to administer it. A workplace injury reduces your employee headcount, which increases the workload on other employees, leading to riskier behaviors. A workplace is more likely to carry a more expensive worker's compensation insurance policy if they have more injuries. Injured workers also lead to safety citations from OSHA when they conduct on-site inspections. These indirect costs can quickly become significant when a lack of safety training exists.

You must keep up.

Safety training can be a stressful subject because you may not be certain you're offering the correct training to your employees. Not to mention the number of hours and cost it takes to develop in-house safety training. Lastly, you must consider the compliance of the training; and staying up to date with the ever-changing OSHA standards.

SEPTEMBER 2023 QUIZ

TRUE or FALSE

1. High visibility clothing has been proven to be a waste of time and money.
2. A good safety training program helps employees identify hazards so they can be addressed.
3. Rusty water heaters typically do not require repair.
4. Fire extinguishers do not require monthly inspections.
5. Breaker panels require two feet of clearance.

Answers

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