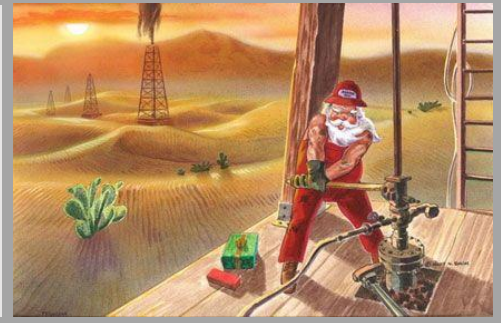


Holiday Hazards

Festive celebrations, lots of food, and a flurry of activities are hallmarks of the holiday season, but they can also lead to dangers in the workplace. Let's take a look at the top three causes of workplace related accidents in the month of December.



Auto Accidents:

When it comes to auto accidents during the holidays, you are wise to consider the three D's:

- Drunk driving
- Distracted driving
- Drowsy driving

Drinking- use a designated driver or a ride share service when attending events where alcohol will be served. An intoxicated driver is a threat to everybody in the vehicle and everybody on the road- very simply, don't drive drunk! If you are in a bind and you don't have a safe and sober ride available, give me a call and I will get you a ride home, or to a safe place- no questions asked, and it will be kept confidential.

Distracted Driving- put the cell phone away and pay attention to the road and other drivers! Most non-alcohol related highway accidents occur while using cell phones, and the failure to anticipate other distracted drivers. **Be alert!**

Drowsiness affects a driver's ability to make good decisions and slows reaction time if needing to break or steer suddenly. When I drove oil tankers years ago, I learned four super effective ways to eliminate drowsiness while behind the wheel:

- Plan your work so you get adequate sleep
- If you become drowsy, pull over and take a power nap
- Pluck a nose hair or a mustache hair when you get tired- it brings you right to life
- Eat an apple- it works even better than coffee

Fatigue:

Of all the months that fatigue can be a workplace hazard, December is the big one!

The holidays are generally a stressful time for everybody. Because our operations face specific challenges associated with vacationing workers and colder weather toward the holiday season, some of our busiest times will be leading up to the end of the year. We are also tasked with personal responsibilities, such as attending school and community events, decorating our homes, fulfilling family commitments, and meeting the numerous physical and financial demands of the holidays. As a result, fatigue and stress in the workplace can lead to significant safety challenges. Interesting fact- injuries peak to a 4.8% incident rate for workers who work more than 40 hours per week and receive less than 5 hours of sleep. This means that one night without the proper rest increases your risk of making a mistake by 87.5%. The best mitigation to this hazard is to schedule more sleep into your routine and take a short power nap if needed.

Food Poisoning:

What's a holiday season without food, right? But before everyone brings their favorite potluck dish to the office, it is important to remember the basic holiday food safety tips to prevent the gift of food poisoning:

- Keep food surfaces clean and wash your hands frequently when handling food.
- Make sure meats are fully cooked before serving.
- Refrigerate food within two hours of serving.
- Don't eat food if you don't know how long it has been out, or how old it is.
- Wash your hands frequently when handling food.
- Know the ingredients of the dish if you have food allergies.