

THE

CONNECTION

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Cold Medications Pose Safety Hazards

Beware if you take any over-the-counter medications at work to help fend off the effects of allergies, or a cold or flu bug. Many over-the-counter medications can trigger side effects that could seriously affect your ability to work safely. Common remedies containing decongestants or antihistamines can cause drowsiness and slow your reflexes. They can also impair your ability to concentrate, make decisions, drive a vehicle, or operate machinery. All of these reactions translate into safety hazards. If you need to take a cold or allergy remedy, follow these guidelines:

Follow recommended dosages.

Doubling a dose will also double the side effects.

Read labels carefully to find out proper dosages, potential side effects, and precautions you should take.

Stay away from combination medications which tend to have more side effects.

TOOLBOX TALKS:

MAKE THEM EFFECTIVE

Toolbox talks are specifically geared to construction workers who need to know about safety problems and issues, but don't have a lot of time to sacrifice.

Toolbox talks make workers aware of the possibility of the hazards they'll face on the job. That's why it's so important to discuss current events and what has transpired at other locations. If workers learn about the accidents and near-misses on other jobs, they will be more likely to apply the information to their own site.

WHO NEEDS THEM? Everybody of course, can benefit from toolbox talks. But the two types of workers who probably get the most from them are veterans, with many years of experience, and the new worker.

The worker who has been on the job a long time tends to become lax regarding safety. On the other hand, the new worker won't know the job and hasn't had much safety training.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME? Most people are more receptive in the morning. So the best time to have a toolbox talk is just before workers start in the morning or during morning coffee break. The thought of safety will then be fresh in the minds of you and your coworkers.

HOW LONG SHOULD THEY BE? Toolbox talks should not be long dissertations read straight from a book. The talks should run anywhere from 5 to 7 minutes.

Try to take an active part in the toolbox talk discussions by giving input or insight into various aspects on your particular site.

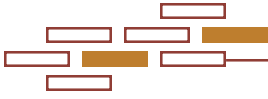


Four Other Reasons Why Hard Hats Are Important

When you think of hard hats, you naturally think of construction workers. You might assume they wear this kind of protective equipment because of the danger of falling objects.

While protection from falling objects is a major reason to require employees to wear hard hats, it is far from the only reason. Hard hats are crucial for protecting workers from all kinds of hazards, including

- Penetration injuries from falling objects;
- Banging their heads into a fixed object;
- Contact with electrical parts; and
- Preventing long hair from getting caught in machine parts.



Fair Warning

When Mount St. Helens was about to erupt, some people ignored the warning and stayed nearby. Warnings of hurricanes, floods, mud slides, and other disasters have brought the same lack of response from certain people. Why do some individuals refuse to heed these warnings? A lot of them simply think, "it can't happen to me." Maybe you think this attitude is silly and dangerous. But do you always heed warnings?

Some workers disregard danger signs frequently. They use a power tool showing an obvious sign of danger - a frayed cord. They smoke in "No Smoking" zones. They continue to run machines that are vibrating dangerously. Some people refuse to buckle up their seatbelts even though they've been told about the dangers time and time again. They just don't think these warnings apply to them - until it's too late.

Work with your safety and the safety of your co-workers in mind at all times.

Don't scoff at safety rules or measures. Instead, obey all regulations. And encourage your co-workers to follow them, too. Remember, their carelessness could mean injury to you. Safe conditions exist only when everyone pitches in to work safely.

Read and Heed

No Smoking...Use in Emergency...For Electrical Fires Only...Go Slow... Warning signs are posted for your protection. They carry a message you can't afford to miss. So read and heed:

Be on the lookout for warning signs, especially when working in hazardous

areas. If a sign says "No jumping from platforms," don't!

Read all warning and safety instructions on equipment and machinery before use. And if the sign says "Shut off power before cleaning" or "Operate only if authorized," that's just what it means - and it means you!

Don't forget that warning signs aren't just part of the scenery - they are part of the safety scene. Always obey warning signs.

NIOSHA Reveals Six Myths About Back Belts

By now, everyone knows back belts have been developing a bad reputation as being ineffective in preventing back strains and ergonomic injuries. Here are some of the myths about back belts that the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSHA) says are unproven:

1. Back belts reduce internal forces on the spine during forceful exertions of the back
2. Back belts increase intra-abdominal pressure, which may counter the forces of the spine
3. Back belts stiffen the spine, which may decrease forces on the spine
4. Back belts restrict bending motions or range of motion
5. Back belts remind the wearer to lift properly
6. Back belts have reduced injuries in certain workplaces.

Apply Cold Packs to a Strain

When you strain a ligament or a muscle, applying cold packs for the following one to three days is the best treatment.

Don't use heat. Hot soaks or a heating pad can increase swelling and inflammation. Use cold because it:

Reduces swelling and inflammation
Constricts blood vessels, which helps control bleeding within the injury
Relieves pain and acts as a local anesthetic

Bruising usually stops within one to three days after an injury. To relieve muscle spasms and the pain of minor sprains and strains, apply cold for 20 minutes at a time, every four to six hours for the first day or two.

Commercial cold packs are generally safer than ice. Prolonged exposure to ice can result in frostbite.

When should you use heat? Heat is better for chronic pain or for muscle relaxation. It could be helpful after the first three or four days.

Keep A Close Eye on Anything with A Blade

Workers can suffer an amputation when an appendage becomes crushed. They can also lose a finger or an arm if they come into contact with something that cuts.

Look closely at hand tools. You might spend hours crafting guards for stationary machines and forget about cutting tools workers hold in their hands. Any kind of cutting tool can be dangerous. Saws and knives are good examples.

Although power tools are certainly dangerous, non-powered hand tools can cause an amputation almost as easily.

We welcome your comments and suggestions about the Connection. To submit articles and/or topic ideas, please call: (616) 629-9708 or send to P.O. Box 460, Richland,