Safety Connections Inc.

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Weekly Safety Tip

Life Is All About Choices!® September 5, 2017

SCI Safety Tip: Keeping Your Mobile Workforce Safe and Connected

By Chris Holbert
Source: http://www.ehstoday.com
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The traditional business day and workplace is changing across many industries in the United States. Workers no longer are putting on suits and ties to report into an office for an eight-hour workday at a desk. Often, they're climbing into a car or truck and setting off on their own to work at a remote location.

According to IDC Research, 72 percent of the U.S. workforce is expected to be made up of mobile workers by 2020. When employees are not operating in an office or controlled environment, it makes it more difficult for businesses to manage the risks those workers invariably encounter. Further, it becomes increasingly more difficult to know when a worker needs emergency assistance.
This shift away from traditional workplace settings creates a need for companies to develop new safety protocols and invest in different technologies that secure the safety of mobile workers.

While proper training in safety procedures remains crucial, providing mobile workers with the right tools to request and receive help in an emergency situation becomes more important and critical in avoiding negative outcomes. According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 95 percent of Americans now own a cell phone of some type and more than one-third own a smartphone. While these devices provide many conveniences, in emergency situations they remain highly limited, especially in environments that have poor reception or that limit a user's ability to reach and operate the device.

SCI Safety Slogan

James Lehrke-SCI

For example, a cell phone is not able to detect if someone slipped and fell, caught a limb in a piece of machinery or experienced one of the thousands of other emergencies that can occur on the job. With a cell phone, the user still is required to be conscious and within range of the phone to be able to make a call for help.

In the case of mobile workers and lone workers, cell phones are not the most reliable or function-rich options for tracking and monitoring employee safety and health. Additionally, in the case where a lone worker is confronted by a hostile third party, the cell phone often is the first item taken, preventing a call for help.

Wearables

In emergency situations, there is a better solution than traditional cell phones or smartphones. These situations are good candidates for easily worn devices (i.e., wearables or wearable devices) that automatically report changes that could indicate an emergency. Included in these types of devices are ones that a worker easily could utilize to call for help without having to speak or make much of a movement.

Already there are products like smart hard hats, smart safety vests, smart eyewear and even stick-on patches that can monitor everything from an employee's location to body temperature and positioning. These devices eliminate the need for a worker to proactively report an emergency, but like cell phones, they have their limitations.

For example, while the devices are able to transmit certain information about a situation to a manager or human resources department, they do not create a direct line of communication between the worker and responder. If verbal communication is possible in the emergency situation, the worker still would need to place a call on a phone.

Personal Emergency Response Devices

A better option would be a mobile personal emergency response system, which is a device similar to those used by seniors for years. These devices essentially are a help button that can be pressed after a fall to alert emergency responders that assistance is needed. These types of technologies have become more beneficial because they no longer require a base station device to place calls, which limited their range of use.

Like other wearables, these devices are small and lightweight. They provide state-of-the-art location technologies, and also offer built-in fall advisory capabilities. Wearables with this type of functionality are able to detect horizontal and vertical movement, but they take safety a step further than simply reporting a fall on the job via a text message or red flag in a software system.

Personal emergency response devices eliminate the need for the worker to initiate a call for help. Instead, workers can trigger one automatically. Cloud-based technologies make it possible for supervisors and managers to immediately respond to the call for help.

Another benefit of these devices is long battery life. Unlike phones that sometimes have to be recharged during the day, personal response devices have fewer functions and do not need to be fully functional at all times. They can be left off or placed in a hibernation mode until the SOS button on the device is pressed. Once this action occurs, location information can be sent to a central reporting destination and an emergency call can be placed. This enables the devices to run on a single charge for as long as 30 days, depending upon the configuration and use of the device.

Whatever wearable device makes the most sense for your workers, the most important factor is that business owners and managers take advantage of these new technologies that could save lives and improve the safety and health of their lone workers and mobile employees.

OSHA Compliance: OSHA's Final Rule to Protect Workers from Exposure to Respirable Crystalline Silica

Source: http://www.osha.gov

Rule requires engineering controls to keep workers from breathing silica dust

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued a final rule to curb lung cancer, silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease in America's workers by limiting their exposure to respirable crystalline silica. The rule is comprised of two standards, one for Construction and one for General Industry and Maritime.

Aurora Health Care®

Quick Tips for Healthy Living

September is Whole Grains Month

Health experts advise everyone – men and women, young and old – that grains are a healthy necessity in every diet, and that it's important to eat at least half our grains as "whole grains." Whole grains reduce risks of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and obesity. Check out the tips below from the Whole Grains Council for ways to enjoy whole grains!

Make Easy Substitutions

- Switch half the white flour to whole wheat flour in your regular recipes for cookies, muffins, quick breads and pancakes.
- Replace one third of the flour in a recipe with quick or old-fashioned oats.
- Add half a cup of cooked bulgur, wild rice, or barley to bread stuffing.
- Add half a cup of cooked wheat or rye berries, wild rice, brown rice, sorghum or barley to your favorite canned or home-made soup.
- Use whole corn meal for corn cakes, corn breads and corn muffins.
- Add three-quarters of a cup of uncooked oats for each pound of ground beef or turkey when you make meatballs, burgers or meatloaf.
- Stir a handful of rolled oats in your yogurt, for quick crunch with no cooking necessary.

Try New Foods

- Make risottos, pilafs and other rice-like dishes with whole grains such as barley, brown rice, bulgur, millet, quinoa or sorghum.
- Enjoy whole grain salads like tabbouleh.
- Buy whole grain pasta, or a blend that's part whole-grain, part white.
- Try whole grain breads. Kids especially like whole grain pita bread.
- Look for cereals made with grains like Kamut®, kasha (buckwheat) or spelt.

OSHA estimates that the rule will save over 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis each year, once its effects are fully realized. The Final Rule is projected to provide net benefits of about $7.7 billion, annually.

About 2.3 million workers are exposed to respirable crystalline silica in their workplaces, including 2 million construction workers who drill, cut, crush, or grind silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone, and 300,000 workers in general industry operations such as brick manufacturing, foundries, and hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking. Responsible employers have been protecting workers from harmful exposure to respirable crystalline silica for years, using widely-available equipment that controls dust with water or a vacuum system.

Key Provisions

- Reduces the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift.
- Requires employers to: use engineering controls (such as water or ventilation) to limit worker exposure to the PEL; provide respirators when engineering controls cannot adequately limit exposure; limit worker access to high exposure areas; develop a written exposure control plan, offer medical exams to highly exposed workers, and train workers on silica risks and how to limit exposures.
- Provides medical exams to monitor highly exposed workers and gives them information about their lung health.
- Provides flexibility to help employers — especially small businesses — protect workers from silica exposure.

Compliance Schedule

Both standards contained in the final rule take effect on June 23, 2016., after which industries have one to five years to comply with most requirements, based on the following schedule:
Construction - September 23, 2017. OSHA delayed enforcement in order to conduct additional outreach and provide educational materials and guidance for employer. See the memorandum.
General Industry and Maritime - June 23, 2018, two years after the effective date.
Hydraulic Fracturing - June 23, 2018, two years after the effective date for all provisions except Engineering Controls, which have a compliance date of June 23, 2021.

We'd always like your feedback. Let us know what articles you'd like to see!

In Loving Memory…
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