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Weekly Safety Tip

Life Is All About Choices![®]

February 16, 2015

SCI Safety Tip: *Working (safely) from home (Part 1)*

Source: <http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com>

By: Tom Musick

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In the mid-1980s, the state of California wanted to take a closer look at the possibility of allowing some of its employees in the public sector to work from home.

That's where David Fleming, a telework consultant who now runs Davis, CA-based Fleming Ltd., stepped in.

Fleming proposed a telecommuting pilot program, which the state accepted and selected him to direct. The program proved to be such a success that, by 1990, California had passed legislation that formally established telecommuting as public policy in the state. Several years later, Fleming was part of a panel that briefed Congress on the subject.

Throughout the process, Fleming said, safety and liability were part of the conversation.

“Oh, yes,” Fleming said. “That was a big item. Very much a concern.”

Almost three decades later, it still is.

SCI Safety Slogan

***Always take the
safest path, never
take shortcuts.***

James Lehrke-SCI

At organizations, universities and other agencies across the country, safety professionals and human resources directors face a challenging task: ensuring safety for the increasing number of employees who are out of sight, working remotely from a home office.

Privacy concerns dissuade some employers from conducting unsolicited home office inspections. In a 2000 directive, OSHA announced it would not conduct inspections of employees' home offices, nor would it hold employers liable for employees' home offices.

But potential workers' compensation issues linger for organizations that have employees injured while working from home. What if an employee trips on an extension cord? What if an employee's home office has no smoke detector?

Safer employees make for better employees, regardless of where their office is located.

"It all falls back on the responsibility of the worker," said Amy Artuso Heinzen, a program manager with the National Safety Council who specializes in home and community safety. "But the company should have mechanisms in place to provide education on ergonomics and safety checklists. There are many injuries and conditions that could result that are very preventable. That makes it a legitimate concern."

Fleming agreed. "It's another form of work where safety and health certainly plays a role," he said.

Put it in writing

With technology improving, commute times increasing and executives looking to reduce operating expenses, more organizations are turning to telework as a viable alternative.

Nearly 40 percent of 273 employees now take advantage of the telework and flex place programs at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in Rockville, MD, said Janet McNichol, the agency's human resources director. ASHA allows full-time employees to work remotely a maximum of three days a week while spending at least two days a week onsite.

Similar to other employers, ASHA does not enter workers' home offices to perform safety checks. But the association does emphasize the importance of home office safety as part of a telework agreement that employees must accept before being allowed to work from home. "As part of our agreement that we have with our telecommuters, they confirm that they have a dedicated work space at home and that it's safe," McNichol said. "We talk about some of what that means. We want them to minimize the risk."



SCI OSHA Compliance: When PPE is the only choice, make it the right choice

Source: <http://www.blr.com> (Part 4)

Date: January 10, 2014

Manufacturers stepping up to the plate

PPE makers are upping their game when it comes to the quality of use and selection information they provide. Shipp says this is especially important at smaller businesses that may not have safety directors who can properly assess hazards.

One company is producing software that lets users input the chemical, the anticipated length of exposure, and other factors and come away with the amount of time they can safely wear the PPE without the chemical permeating. Another vendor offers QR codes (digital barcodes) on garment labels. Employees swipe the codes with their smartphones to get details about the specific characteristics of the garment.

Also encouraging, says Shipp, are improvements in fit testing for hearing protection. Some product makers can now assess the precise sound level that reaches the worker wearing the protection. Even respirator fit testing, which has been around for decades, is improving thanks to better fit characteristics and products that better mold to the face.



Quick Tips for Healthy Living



The Flu Fight!

Flu Symptoms

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Vomiting or diarrhea

What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

The flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses, but different viruses cause them. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness and dry cough are more common and intense.

Colds are usually milder than the flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations.

So you have the flu...

Fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting? If you're experiencing most of these symptoms, you might have the flu. So, what should you do? Stay home.

In most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people for at least 24 hours after your fever has subsided without the help of fever reducers. Remember to get plenty of rest and drink fluids. If you must leave home to get medical care, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and wash your hands often.

Treat your fever.

Continued next week

As for product innovations, Shipp notes an increasing number of cooling garments, which is important as OSHA is stressing heat protection, especially for workers in the oil fields. Some high-tech vests and other apparel feature air- and liquid-cooling systems that encourage evaporation, thus reducing workers' exposure to heat stress.

Also relatively new to the market are configurable products, such as a fire helmet that can be modified with a face shield, hearing protection, and other gear as needed. There's also progress in PPE for women. For many years, manufacturers did little more than offer a small size of garments made for men. Now, says Shipp, they're developing lines specifically designed to conform to the female body.

New voluntary standard

The ISEA has developed a voluntary consensus standard for PPE conformity assessment. The problem, says the association, is the lack of a consistent system in the United States to assess PPE quality and "the proliferation in the marketplace of imported PPE that shows no evidence of having been tested, much less certified."

The ISEA does not advocate third-party certification of PPE, which is currently required for respirators and for fire-fighting gear. Rather, the association maintains that a voluntary standard could serve as a resource for purchasers, regulators, and others. The standard would require a declaration of conformity stating that a product meets the standard and describing the method of testing.

"It's not foolproof, but it is another way that the user's trust in the supplier can be verified," adds Shipp. The voluntary standard, which will be known as ANSI/ISEA 125, is expected to be sent to ANSI for approval in February. Read more at the ISEA website, <http://www.safetysafetyequipment.org>. Click on "standards," then "conformity assessment."

Important priority

PPE may be your last line of defense when it comes to keeping employees from hazards. But make sure providing and maintaining gear are not last on your safety priority list.

- Provide quality equipment based on a solid analysis of the hazards and, if possible, get workers involved in selection.
- Communicate your PPE choices to your workers and make sure the equipment fits properly.
- Train workers to use the equipment, understand its limitations, and properly put it on, adjust it, wear it, and remove it.
- Maintain PPE properly.



What do you think?

Send us an email at: jconnections@aol.com

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In Loving Memory of Jessica Lehrke

