

School District of Pittsburgh Joint Labor/Management Safety Committee

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Safety Certification Training
- Excel 9-12



June 19, 2008@8:00 AM is the scheduled date for our Safety Committee Certification training. We have invited Michael Rowe, MD, Concentra Medical Director who will speak to the philosophy and relationship between the school district and the Concentra Medical Centers and Kevin Tracey, Adapt Specialist who will present Back Education Classes with the participation of the members.

Please mark you calendar so that you can be present and participate with the safety training and back education classes.

Excel 9-12 Changes for the 2008-2009 school year.

During the Excel 9-12 transition of the district there are potential risks that can be avoided and eliminated by remembering that employee safety is a priority during the plan. The **Accident Illness Prevention Program Manual** is a good guide to follow and has been successfully used by District employees in reducing workplace accidents by 20% since 2003.

Looking at what tasks associated with the Excel 9-12 transition, the following information will be helpful in keeping you safe. The information included will guide you safely with the following topics:

1. Identifying hazards in the workplace.
2. Proper lifting and back safety awareness.
3. Personal protective equipment (PPE).
4. Slip and fall awareness.
5. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).
6. Lawn mower and garden equipment safety.
7. Heat stress in the workplace.
8. Fire and safety prevention.
9. Electrical safety.

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10. Classroom safety.
11. Employee safety Web Site

Identifying hazards in the workplace

As we begin to pack boxes, climb ladders to remove posters, mobiles and educational materials that are too high to reach from the ground and close our classrooms for the moves, the sense of urgency must never be replaced with common sense. The following are some of the questions that you should ask before beginning the right sizing tasks:

Have I done this job before? If I have not done this job how do I perform it safely and without putting others at risk?

Do I in fact know how to perform this task? If I have not, who do I ask to receive instructions on the safe procedure?

If I have done this job before, were there any safety concerns that still exist? Do I have the skills to remedy those concerns and reduce the risk of injury?

What are the hazards associated with the task?

What do I need to do to stay safe and prevent injury to myself and others?

Do I need special tools or equipment to complete the task? If I need the specialized equipment, have I received the proper training?

Do I need to receive permission to perform the work? Have I received instruction from my supervisor?

Have I done my part by reporting unsafe conditions?

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Am I following the safe methods of performing my work?

If you have never performed a particular task before, there is probably a safe method or procedure that would reduce your chance of being injured. Always ask your supervisor if you are unsure on how to keep you from being injured. Your job is what you were hired and trained to perform on a daily basis. A task is that part of your job that you may need additional training to complete. Reviewing the Accident Illness Prevention Program Manual will help you with the process of safety. Supervisors must never assume that an employee knows how to safely perform the tasks at hand. Supervisors must provide the training associated with the employee's work if those employees have not been appropriately trained. It is the employer's responsibility to make the employees safe. If an employee faces a new or an unidentified hazard associated with a work task, they should report the hazard to their supervisor.

Proper Lifting and Back Safety

During the right sizing plan, employees will be completing tasks that they normally do not accomplish during their day's work. Part of what will be done is the packing, storing, and moving of boxes and materials that will need to be moved during the plan. Though it may seem trivial there are risks involved in this task that should be identified. Potential back injuries are:

Strain

Bulging

Herniated disk

Fractures

Any one of these injuries will cause pain and may limit or even restrict your ability to move. Unfortunately, if you do suffer a back injury, you will probably become much more familiar with some of these terms than you would like.

A strain is what most "weekend warriors" experience after they push their unconditioned backs too hard by overusing or overstretching their back muscles. A sprain is diagnosed when a sudden movement causes a ligament to tear. This is usually the result of years of abuse and inactivity. Before employees begin the process of packing and moving boxes it is recommended that they take their time to pack. Use tables to place the boxes on while packing. Limit the bending and lifting to load boxes. When lifting heavy loads, use your legs and not your back.

A proper lifting technique is to keep your back straight and vertical. Test the lift to make sure that it is not too heavy. When moving the box from location to another, carry the box with both hands at your waste. If it is a long distance, put the box on a cart or dollie to eliminate the strain on your back.

Causes of back injury are:

Years of abuse

Poor posture

Unconditioned back

Bad lifting techniques

Physical conditioning refers not only to your back muscles but also to your stomach and buttock muscles. Maintaining a mild regimen of exercise will go a long way toward keeping your back from being injured. Excess weight, particularly potbellies, can greatly contribute to poor back posture and back pain. Weight adds stress to the components of the back. A mild but regular exercise program to reduce or maintain your weight will also help prevent back pain.

Always consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program!

Some recommended exercises to condition your back are:

Walking 30 minutes a day.

A daily regimen of stretching exercises will improve flexibility.

Sit-ups will help strengthen stomach muscles.

Leg lifts, both standing or when laying will strengthen your buttocks.

Leg squats not only strengthen your back, stomach and buttocks they also help you practice proper lifting techniques.

All of the listed recommendations will reduce your likelihood of injury but common sense will and patience will go a long way to reduce your risk as well.

Proper lifting techniques

Stand close with a shoulder width stance

Squat by bending your knees and hips

Pull the load close to you and grasp it firmly

Tighten your stomach and lift your head

Rise up with your legs.

Common sense will tell you that if you are not in shape and you do lift boxes 100 times, you are going to be sore. It is highly recommended that you start packing boxes now, a few each day. If you are not in excellent physical shape you are going to be sore if you attempt to pack 100 boxes in a day! Those items that you are not going to use until September should be packed away now.

Common sense also tells us to make sure that you can see where you are going to walk while carrying the load. Clear your path first before you lift and carry a box. Make sure that there is a spot to place the box when you are ready to put the box down. Take short steady steps when you are walking with the box. Make sure that you are not walking on a slippery surface or a debris strewn floor.

If the load is too heavy get help or use equipment that will help you!

Using carts and dollies makes the most sense when lifting and moving heavy boxes. Dollies and carts should be available to use at your location.

Think about your back

Think long term

Do not try to lift too much at one time

Do not try to lift too many at one time

Consider your back in all things

Maintain back posture and conditioning

Use available lifting equipment

Have a plan

Always use your legs.

Get help if the load is too heavy

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

During the right sizing plan some personal protective equipment may be more useful than others but all personal protective equipment (PPE) is equally important.

Training

Eye and Face protection

Respirator

Head Protection

Foot Protection

Hand Protection

Personal Protective equipment selection

All employees who are required to wear PPE are also required on the procedures on how to wear, maintain and sanitize the equipment. During the right sizing plan the most common type of PPE will be hand protection.

Gloves will be of a safe design and construction for the work to be performed. Transportation employees use gloves on a daily basis to protect their hands while moving heavy boxes. Foot protection normally is in those production areas or construction areas where heavy objects have a propensity to fall.

Common sense tells us that as an employee cutting grass should wear a sturdy work shoe with lugs on the sole to prevent slipping. While packing boxes common sense would tell employees to wear a sturdy shoe to prevent injury. While washing walls an employee should not wear “flip flops” or open toed shoes. Sandals should not be worn when working with the transportation department. Employees should not wear “high heeled” shoes when packing boxes. Employees should not walk around any job site without shoes.

In construction sites hard hats will be issued where there is a danger of falling objects. The safety hats must be fitted correctly and inspected by the supervisor issuing the hats.

Personal Protective Equipment will be issued by the District. At no time should an employee be permitted to use unauthorized personal protective equipment.

Heat Stress and the Workplace

The right sizing plan takes place during those months when this hazard is of great concern. Though heat stress is a hazard it can be reduced and almost eliminated by following simple rules of safety.

To reduce heat stress the employee should acclimatize themselves to the temperatures. Again this is something that you should work up to and not attempt to over strenuous

activities all at once. Your body will give you the indicators that there is something wrong and for you to take action.

Replace your bodily fluids regularly. Drink plenty of water during the course of your work day. Never drink alcohol to replenish your bodily fluids on an extremely hot day. The alcohol will dehydrate your system. Small amounts of water regularly are better for your body to process. Usually one cup every 20 to 30 minutes will keep your body hydrated during a work day. Hotter temperatures will demand a greater fluid intake.

The use of fans while packing boxes in a building without air-conditioning will help evaporate the perspiration from your skin making you feel cooler. In extreme heat situations you will need to pace yourself and work smart. If it is cooler in the mornings you will want to complete the strenuous work before the temperatures heat up.

Dress in light airy clothing to accommodate your body’s effort to dry the perspiration from your body. If you are working outside on a hot sunny day, don’t forget to use sun screen and a hat.

Take enough “breaks” when packing boxes to let your body cool down. You will need to re-hydrate your body so make sure that you are drinking plenty of fluids. “Water is a perfect choice to re-hydrate your body.”

Fire Safety Awareness

Issues with packing boxes and storing them until the movers come to pick them up are one of; safe storage, handling as well as packing safely:

It will be of utmost importance that employees remember to not store hazardous chemicals improperly.

Stacking boxes that block an entrance or exit will also cause a serious hazard.

The items that are being packed should not present a hazard to the movers if the box is dropped or damaged during the move.

When you are stacking boxes for storage, never stack them so high that they would present a hazard if they are pushed or bumped.

Make sure that you are not blocking an aisle or walkway when you stack and store your boxes and materials.

Never store boxes or materials at any time!

Never mix organic and inorganic acids in one container.

Hazardous chemicals must be packed with the appropriate care!

Hazardous chemicals must be labeled accordingly.

Electrical Safety

As you are setting up your new classroom, you may want to temporarily hook up a lamp, overhead projector or a computer. Remember that electric cords are not to be stretched across walkways or aisles. Never create a tripping hazard.

The following recommendations should be used by all employees in the district:

Never create a tripping hazard with an electric cord or extension cord.

Never place electrical cords under carpets or matting.

Never string an electrical cord from a light fixture.

Never tape an electrical cord to the wall.

An extension cord is for temporary service only!

Never use an extension cord as part of a permanent installation.

Only use approved extension cords that are in good condition.

Only use approved grounded extension cords.

Never overload an extension cord.

Only use the extension cord for its designed use.

The district has made arrangements for permanently installed electrical equipment to be disconnected and moved by “identified competent employees,” who will complete the tasks of safely disconnecting the equipment for the move. If you have been identified as one of the competent employees, you will use the “lock / out – tag / out,” system while disconnecting the equipment.

If you have not been identified as a competent employee who is specifically responsible for disconnecting electrified equipment, notify your supervisor for help. They will have instructions for getting the equipment moved and installed for you.