



## HEAT STRESS - PART 1

With warmer weather on the way, it's time for businesses to take a close look at their work safety programs in order to protect their workers from the dangers of heat stress.

Earlier this year, California rolled out a major update to the country's heat stress program, shedding light on the importance of tailoring workplace policies and procedures to address high-temperature conditions.

A heat stress program should be a permanent part of your company's Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP) whether your work site is located in California or another state. You'll want to ensure your program covers all the bases since every workplace is unique in location and worksite assessment.

Here are some points to keep in mind:

**Shade:** Workers should have access to shaded areas onsite. This may require erecting structures if the local geography can't accommodate.

**Water:** Potable water must be provided, and employees should be encouraged to drink it regularly. Dehydration is one of the most common and dangerous symptoms of heat stress illness. Ensure the water comes from a clean source.

**High Heat:** Make sure the program includes procedures unique to high-heat situations. Regularly-scheduled short breaks in a shaded area, for example, are crucial in managing core body temperatures.

**Emergency Response:** All workers need to be trained on how to respond to heat stress symptoms. Training should include first aid, how to recognize symptoms, and who to contact for emergency medical aid.

**Acclimatization:** New workers must be allowed to acclimatize to working in warm weather. Check your local requirements to determine the length of the acclimatization period, but it generally takes between two to three weeks.

Planning and preventative measures are key in protecting workers from heat stress illness.

For information on how we can help design a plan that's right for your workplace, visit [safety-services-company.com](http://safety-services-company.com).

## COMPLIANCE CORNER

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***“Certain health conditions and medications can also affect your ability to cope.”***

*Dr. Linda Hamilton*  
Performance Psychologist

## AN ALARMING SOUNDOFF

Each year in the U.S., more than 200 fires occur in the workplace to create losses of over \$2 billion dollars from employee injuries, fatalities, and damage to property. Every injury and every dollar spent provides reasons for the importance of regular testing of workplace emergency alarms.

Emergency alarms are designed to alert employees of an imminent hazard to provide sufficient time to react. In the case of fire, an alarm should sound at the first detection of smoke, to give workers prompt notice that a fire is probable and to initiate emergency response or evacuation. Without these alarms, workers could be unaware of danger.

At a minimum, alarms should be:

- Tested for functionality every two months
- Clearly audible over all other regular workplace noise
- Checked for power sources (such as batteries) as often as needed to ensure reliability

Maintenance and servicing should only be performed by trained professionals. Manual alarms need to be located conspicuously, unobstructed, and easily accessible to workers.

Save your business from potentially catastrophic losses and put safety first.

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Violence in the workplace is one of those circumstances in which no one expects to ever find themselves. You know it happens. You read about it in the news but never think it could happen where you work.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, there were 14,770 workplace homicides between 1992 and 2012. In 2013, there were 397 homicide victims; and, those fatalities accounted for 9 percent of all workplace deaths that year.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence as "violence or the threat of violence against workers. It can occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicides, one of the leading causes of job-related deaths."

To assess your risk, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) suggests a few questions to ask yourself:

*Do you work alone or with very few people?*

*Are you providing health care or health services?*

*Do you have coworkers who seem irritable or unstable?*

*Is money exchanged?*

*Do you work late-night or overnight?*

*Is your workplace located in a high crime area?*

*Does your workplace serve alcohol?*

These conditions can increase the risk of workplace violence, but every workplace can provide a foundation for situational violence. Employees are human with unpredictable behaviors often brought on by unfavorable life circumstances. A coworker could be having problems at home, for example – divorce, loss of a family member, financial issues, etc. Unless you know what to look for, you may be unaware of how close they are to a violent outburst.

Workplace violence isn't always related directly to a given workplace. Nearly 80 percent of workplace homicides come from outside of the business. Robberies, upset customers, domestic disputes that follow a coworker to the workplace, and violent events occurring in the vicinity are common.

Beyond the obvious impacts workplace violence has on its victims, there are business implications as well. Violent incidents cost businesses billions of dollars each year in necessary security increases, workers' compensation, employee loss and downtime, damaged property, public relations, and psychological impairment.

*So what can be done to reduce risk?*

Not all workplace violence incidents can be predicted. Robberies, for example, can strike even in the safest, most affluent of neighborhoods. The best course of action is to develop a written workplace violence program which thoroughly details your business' policies and procedures on the matter.

For unpredictable incidents, you should implement a response and evacuation system and hold regular drills. These programs should include instructions for incidents that occur in and out of the work site (i.e. lockdowns indoors, or evacuations to an offsite location).

Don't forget to include zero-tolerance policies on workplace violence so employees know exactly what's expected of them and the consequences in the event the policy(s) are not followed.

Some signs to watch for are irritability and poor response to criticism.

*Is your coworker experiencing problems at home?*

Consider establishing a reporting process for all employees and contractors to understand and follow. The process should include specific people designated as those to contact in the instance that a coworker is engaged in suspicious or dangerous behavior.

Examine the resources available from a management perspective. Consider offering counseling services so stressed or overworked employees can safely and confidently discuss their misconduct and find a suitable solution. Also, fostering a positive, pleasant work environment can go a long way as a preventative measure.

Workplace violence is best addressed before it happens through knowledge and proactive measures. Safety Services Company can help.

For information on how we can help you create a violence-free workplace, visit our website at [safetyservicescompany.com](http://safetyservicescompany.com)

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Electrical hazards exist in nearly every workplace imaginable. Workers who come into contact with these hazards are at risk of devastating injuries or, in extreme cases, fatality. It is vital that employees are thoroughly trained in recognizing, controlling, and avoiding the dangers of electricity.

Field and factory workers are exposed to an especially high number of electrical hazards due to the various machines and power tools present in the workplace. Defective equipment, improper connections, and equipment misuse all greatly increase the chance of worker injury. Make sure you:

- Check outlets for temperature – warm or hot outlets can indicate faulty wiring.
- Protect outdoor circuits, and those near water, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI).
- Inspect cords, outlets, and equipment for exposed wiring, or defective or missing guards before use. Items that don't pass these inspections should be removed from service and repaired or destroyed.
- Use fiberglass or wooden ladders when working near electricity or power lines.
- Use extension cords rated specifically for the voltage of the tool or equipment used.
- Never put unnecessary stress on cords or connections – leave some slack.
- Verify ground wires on three-wire tools and equipment are connected and working properly before use.
- Know the locations of buried or embedded electrical circuits before digging or cutting.

Even though electrical hazards aren't as obvious in an office setting, they're everywhere. Knowing what to look for and what steps to take will make it easier to maintain a safe environment. Overloaded circuits, defective office equipment, damaged outlets or wiring, and obstructed electrical panels are just a few examples. In the office, you should:

- Turn off all office appliances (e.g. coffee makers, radios, etc.) at the end of the day.
- Only use appliances connected to grounded (three-prong) outlets.
- Remove equipment that is defective, malfunctioning, or producing unusual odors from service and contact maintenance.
- Never move or repair electrical items that are energized or plugged in.
- Don't use electrical cords that don't pass a physical inspection.
- Keep extension cords clear of areas where they can be damaged, such as walkways, or caught between walls and heavy equipment.
- Don't overload circuits.
- Don't attach extension cords with staples or hang them from nails.
- Never force a plug into an outlet.
- Inspect outlets for physical deformities or loose-fitting covers before use.

Electrical safety should be everyone's priority. Consider reminders, posters, and refresher training to emphasize this message.

For industry-specific safety information, visit [safety-services-company.com](http://safety-services-company.com)

## MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

On May 4, 2015, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) amends its maintenance regulations that require air carriers which utilize aircraft with 10 or more seats to develop a written program outlining the policies, procedures, methods, and instructions for contract maintenance. This move may help to shed light on the importance of having a company maintenance program in place.

Employee safety, hazard and risk reduction, productivity, and profit can be compromised by defective or malfunctioning equipment.

Maintenance programs are designed to prolong the lifespan of tools and equipment. Businesses which follow a strict maintenance routine (usually daily, monthly, or between shifts) will see the advantage of their equipment remaining in top working condition for longer.

Additionally, regularly-scheduled and preventative maintenance can help businesses avoid unnecessary downtime. If the equipment requires an outside contractor or manufacturer to repair or replace it entirely, costs can add up quickly.

Developing a written maintenance program can save your business a lot of hassle.

For information on how we can help, visit [safety-services-company.com](http://safety-services-company.com).

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

### 10 STEPS TO MINIMIZE RISK

1. Don't assume violence in the workplace couldn't happen to you.
2. Recognize the tell-tale signs of violence.
3. Develop a written program on company safety policies and procedures.
4. Organize a team of employees to oversee the program.
5. Regularly practice emergency response and evacuation drills.
6. Perform background checks before hiring new employees.
7. Encourage employees to leave personal problems at home.
8. Implement safety courses and seminars for employees to attend.
9. Consult with experts on strategies to prevent workplace violence.
10. Train and discuss often.

## Q&A

**Q:** *Do I need to adjust my company safety and health plan as my employee count grows?*

**A:** To put it simply: yes, for two reasons.

First of all, state-specific safety regulations may require adjustments to company policies based on the number of employees in order to achieve compliance. For example, businesses in the state of California with 50 or more employees are required to post the Family Medical Leave Act Poster, Notice B, in a conspicuous location in the workplace. They must also comply with the California Family Rights Act, which is unique to California and differs from its federal counterpart.

Compliance requirements aside, a higher employee count means a higher risk of injury. Company policies and procedures should be treated as “living documents” that are flexible enough to adapt seamlessly to changing workplace conditions. This means understanding that a workplace of 100 employees may need more specifically-tailored policies to protect workers from injury than a workplace of 50. As your company grows, so should your safety and health plans.

Before you modify your plans, find out what your local compliance requirements are. In many cases, state requirements differ from or exceed federal requirements. Contact your local OSHA office to lock down specifics and examine your plan to determine its scalability.

If it would require a complete overhaul, you might want to take a closer look.

## SHORT-TERM WORKERS DESERVE SAFEGUARDS

In the last decade, economic recessions have forced many businesses to rely on temporary employees to fulfill their workforce needs. As much as 15 percent of the current workforce is made up of short-term workers. Often, temporary workers are frequently overlooked in terms of proper safety training.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) stance on safeguarding short-term workers is they are entitled to the same degree of safety training that permanent employees receive.

Miscommunication and cutting corners can lead to injuries. In 2012, 16 percent of all workplace injuries involved temporary employees, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Why?

Temporary employees often avoid reporting safety hazards and concerns out of fear of retaliation from their employer or staffing agency. They worry that filing a complaint or speaking to a supervisor about training will lead to replacement; instead, they remain silent and hope for the best.

Unfortunately, it’s not uncommon for supervisors to provide “bare minimum”

training to short-term workers because they assume the worker won’t be on the worksite long enough to experience possible safety hazard. The fact is OSHA has been campaigning for the safety of temporary employees since April of 2013. Both employers and staffing agencies who skimp on training will pay a price. In June 2014, one Texas employer and its staffing agency were fined over \$130,000 for failing to ensure a safe working atmosphere for its short-term workers.

In order to reduce the number of injuries to short-term workers and to increase safety awareness, OSHA emphasizes the importance of communication between the staffing agency, the host employer, and the short-term employee. OSHA suggests that the staffing agency provides general health and safety training while the employer fills in the gaps with training that focuses on site-specific hazards.

Additionally, it is the staffing agency’s responsibility to verify with the employer that all worksite safety conditions are met. Temporary workers should never be afraid to report unsafe conditions to their employer, to the staffing agency, or to OSHA.

All workers, short-term or otherwise, deserve the tools they need to work safely.

## Help us spread the word.

For each friend you refer who buys a product from us valued at more than \$200, we will reward you with

**\$50 OFF**  
your next purchase

*Type your referral's name and phone number in the boxes below and return the flyer via e-mail to redeem your \$50.*

Name of referred client

Phone #



Your name

Email



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