SAFETY SERVICES COMPANY®

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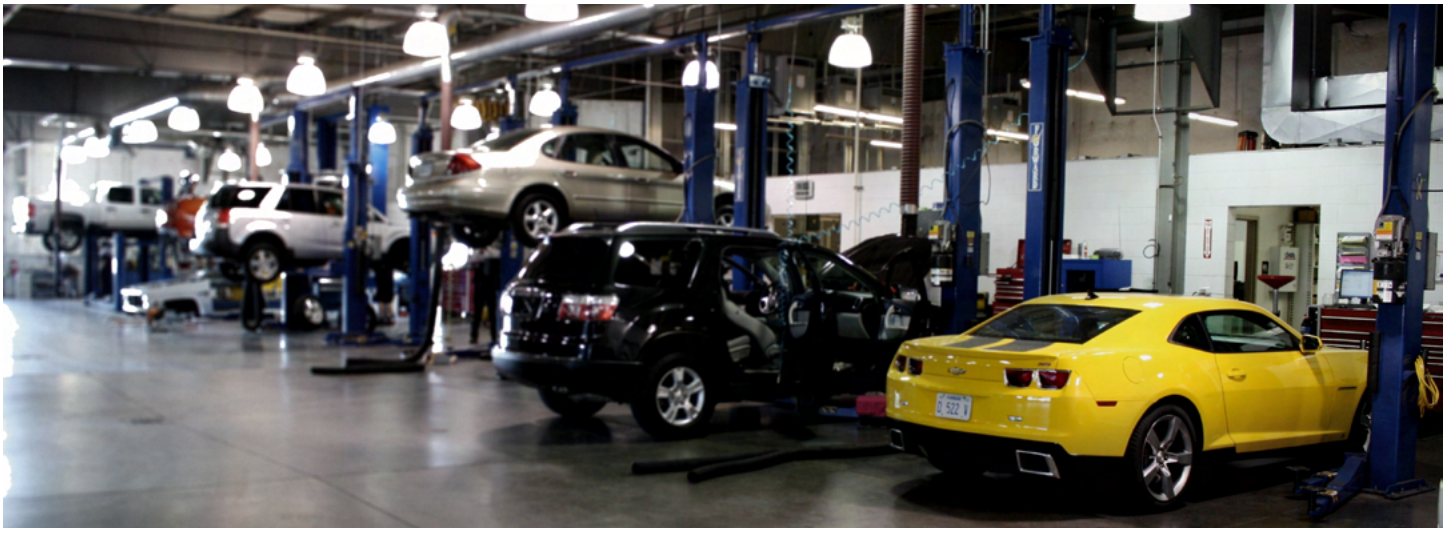

CAN WE TRUST THE MIDAS TOUCH?

Since January, five companies in Rockland and Westchester counties in New York received $53,200 in fines as a result of safety complaints. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) administered the fines after receiving numerous reports about workplace conditions.

BRG Automotive Enterprises, a Midas auto shop, received the largest fines, totaling $20,300 for infractions including improper eye and face protection, hazard communication, and mechanical power transmission.

These citations speak to the larger issue of safety and hazard communication going unmanaged in many automotive shops across North America. Automotive shop workers are particularly vulnerable to workplace hazards due to chemicals, tools and machines, tight work spaces, and the nature of their work. This is why the United States Department of Labor and OSHA have established workplace standards for both mechanics and their shops. Lack of compliance implementation can lead to worker injuries and illnesses and the costs that accompany them and, as BRG Automotive Enterprises now knows, hefty fines.

One of the most often-violated OSHA standards in the automotive industry is the right to know standard. In the matter of hazard communication, the right to know standard equips workers with the knowledge they need to understand and protect themselves from the hazards associated with workplace chemicals. Other standards, which are regularly violated, involve personal protective equipment (PPE). Issues include missing or defective protective gear, inadequate respiratory safety equipment, and too few fire extinguishers. Maintaining safe workspaces with regular inspections keeps proper standards in place.

Beginning this summer, Safety Services Company is providing custom industry solutions for employers in the automotive industry.

Contact us to find out more about how we can help the automotive workplace achieve full compliance.

COMPLIANCE CORNER

July 2015

"The biggest fine went to Midas Auto Shop, totaling $20,300."

The Journal News
April 22, 2015

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ARC FLASH SPARKS

With the summer rainy season underway, workers are at an increased vulnerability to the hazards of arc flash due to seasonal moisture and condensation. Employers should take the time to review their current arc flash safety program to ensure workers are properly trained and protected.

Arc flash is a phenomenon where a flashover of electrical current leaves its intended path and travels through the air from one conductor to another, or to the ground. Because arc flash incidents can be extremely violent and result in serious injury or death, safe work practices including only performing work on de-energized equipment are important to help prevent conditions where an arc flash is possible.

Arc flash can result in blast pressures over 2,000 pounds in strength, temperatures over 19,426 degrees Celsius, fires, burns, sound blasts, and explosive debris. Typical causes include dust, corrosion, condensation, unintentional contact, and metal tools striking the ground or other equipment. Factors include proximity of the worker to the hazard, temperature, and time for the circuit to break. Only qualified employees should perform work in which an arc flash hazard exists.

HABOOBS, MONSOONS, & HURRICANES

As we settle into summer, warm temperatures bring an increase in storm conditions to North America. Inclement weather can pose serious safety risks to workers who are unprepared.

"**Haboob**" is an Arabic word which means "strong wind," and describes an intense dust storm. They occur as a result of thunderstorm conditions. As a storm travels, it picks up pressure from wind and precipitation. When it finally breaks, the pressure falls and wind falls down and outward, picking up dust and debris. Haboobs have been recorded with winds exceeding 113 kilometers per hour (kph), and may reduce visibility to a quarter of a mile.

Any dry or arid region is susceptible to haboob activity. In North America, they are most frequent in Mexico and the southwestern region of the United States including Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas. In Canada, haboobs are most common in the southeastern region of Alberta.

The primary dangers associated with haboobs are visibility, debris, and respiratory hazards from dust inhalation. While in the workplace, choose a central location away from windows. Close doors, windows, blinds, and vents, and turn off the air conditioning to prevent dust from circulating through the air indoors. In a vehicle, pull over out of driving and emergency lanes. Turn the car off (including air conditioning), and close the vents and windows. Do not attempt to drive through a haboob, as significantly decreased visibility can lead to accidents.

A **monsoon** is essentially a strong thunderstorm, seasonal, which occurs when there is a shift in the overall wind pattern in an area. They can occur anywhere in the world, but are more prominent in warm areas where ocean currents exist. Monsoons, like many traditional thunderstorms, present heavy precipitation, high winds, and lightning, all of which can be hazardous.

Monsoons in North America are most common from late June to September. They generally originate in Mexico and spill into the southwest region of the United States around mid-July. States which often experience monsoons are Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, California, Nevada, and Colorado.

Monsoon hazards include high winds, rain, flooding, and lightning.

Hurricanes are massive cyclonic storms that form over ocean waters with temperatures above 27° C. They can reach sizes over 600 miles across, create winds with speeds from 120-322 kph, and move at a speed of 16-32 kph over the ocean. Their reputation for destruction is because they build up size and strength during their formation and travel from the ocean while accumulating seawater evaporation.

Hurricanes often occur between the middle of May and the end of September. Because they are formed over the ocean, the storm only affects coastal regions, although the atmospheric conditions they create can cause inclement weather further inland. In North America, hurricanes are more common on the east coastal regions of Mexico, the southeast areas of the United States surrounding the Gulf of Mexico, and the east coastal regions of Canada.

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Haboob in Phoenix, Arizona 2012

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Dangers of a hurricane include high winds, rain, flooding, and lightning.

Workers should remain indoors during inclement weather. As a rule of thumb, stay central and low – choose an area of the workplace near the center of the building. In emergency high wind conditions, favor the lowest level of the building and stay away from windows, as broken glass and debris can cause injuries.

It is recommended to avoid driving during storms. Wind and rain can cause hazardous and slippery road conditions. If you are caught outside during a storm, focus on your limits. Pull over if you cannot proceed with absolute safety. While driving, reduce speed, increase following distances, and never attempt to drive through a flooded roadway.

Winds and flying debris during a storm can cause fallen power lines. Live electricity coupled with rainwater creates a very hazardous combination. Stay as far from fallen power lines as possible. Do not attempt to remove debris from a power line. If a power line falls on your vehicle, stay inside and call for help.

Training and preparation are key in keeping workers safe during inclement weather. Safety Services Company can tailor a weather emergency plan for your company.

HEAT STRESS – PART III

Summer temperatures pose serious safety hazards to unprotected workers. Among the various heat-related illnesses caused by high temperatures, the most serious is heat stroke.

Heat stroke is considered a serious medical emergency. It occurs when a worker is exposed to high temperatures for a prolonged period and usually accompanies dehydration. The result is a failure of the body's internal temperature control systems. When the core body temperature rises above 41° C, life-threatening symptoms begin and without immediate medical intervention, death may occur as a result of brain damage and organ failure. Symptoms can include headache, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting, shallow breathing, confusion and disorientation, seizures, and unconsciousness.

The following two case studies illustrate the dangers of heat stroke. In 2012, in the state of California, an employee was supervising workers performing fire breaks of vegetation alongside the highway. He began to sweat profusely and experienced body cramping. The outdoor temperature at the time was between 32 and 38° C. His supervisor instructed him to go to urgent care, but he refused. Three days later, he began experiencing similar symptoms and went to see a doctor. He was diagnosed with heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and kidney failure and spent four days in the hospital.

The same year in California, a 50-year-old foreman was coordinating the setup of harvesting equipment for Dole Fresh Vegetables Inc. and supervising a large crew. In the early afternoon, sitting on the steps of the harvester machine, he collapsed to the ground unconscious. Coworkers rushed to his assistance. They checked his vital signs and brought him to a pickup truck where they waited for an ambulance. The workers performed CPR until the paramedics arrived. He was then rushed to the hospital and pronounced dead an hour and fifteen minutes after his collapse.

Heat stroke can strike unexpectedly without warning, even without any previous symptoms. The best way to prevent it is to be prepared and to follow the recommendation steps in preventing heat stress in the workplace.

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EASY ON THE EYES

Although this is the season for sunny days, employees performing work outdoors are at increased risk of the hazards associated with the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. With all of the emphasis in sunscreen and clothing to protect the skin, we often overlook another important part of the body susceptible to injury—the eyes.

UV radiation can cause serious damage to the eyes, harming surface tissues as well as the inner layer known as the cornea and the transparent structure called the lens. Prolonged exposure to UV radiation in the eyes can lead to skin cancer of the eye, cataracts, and other eye disorders. Sources that put us at risk for these conditions don't merely include direct sunlight, but radiation that can penetrate the eyes via reflective surfaces such as metals, sheer surfaces, and pavement.

Ordinary sunglasses are not enough to protect the eyes from UV radiation. The highest degree of protection is achieved through a combination of sunglasses with 99-100 per cent UV-A and UV-B protection and a wide-brimmed hat. For optimal protection, use wrap-around sunglasses. Workers who wear contacts should ensure their contact lenses provide UV protection as well. Check product labels to verify their degrees of protection, and inspect protective equipment often for defects or any damage that compromise its protective qualities.

Stay safe while working outdoors by wearing UV-protective eyewear.

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Q&A

Q: ***Who do I talk to if I have a safety complaint?***

A: ***The best place to start is with your supervisor or workplace safety committee.***

Workplace safety should always be a top priority. If you witness unaddressed conditions which put you or other workers at risk, it is crucial you don't look the other way. The best place to start is with your supervisor or workplace safety committee. In most cases, the issue can be resolved onsite, as the safety hazard may have simply been overlooked.

Should you find by speaking with your supervisor that the hazard is not being addressed in a timely manner, you should file a complaint with your local OHS area office. Safety complaints will often result in a workplace inspection, so be sure to provide as much information as possible. Keep in mind that although many provinces protect workers who refuse to perform work under unsafe conditions and in good faith, you shouldn't just walk off the job.

Federal OHS regulations dictate that employers may not discipline or retaliate against an employee who files a safety complaint. Don't let fear stand in your way to speak out. You have a stake in your safety and that of your coworkers. Don't assume someone else will report a hazard or that the issue will resolve itself.

CONFINED SPACES OPENS TO CONSTRUCTION

On May 1, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) issued a final rule aiming to increase protection for construction workers who perform work in US confined spaces. This is part of OSHA's focused efforts to align manufacturing and general industry regulations with those of the construction industry. In the minds of many industry professionals, this ruling is long overdue as it brings construction sites under the same umbrella of scrutiny present in other types of worksites.

Construction worksites can evolve, through work progression, often changing the number and nature of confined spaces. Previous to this rule, the only requirement for working in confined spaces in the construction industry was worker training. Now, US employers will be required to determine what kinds of spaces exist in the workplace, what the potential hazards are, how to control those hazards, what the necessary training is, and what the rescue procedures will be in the event of an emergency. According to the US Secretary of Labor, Thomas E. Perez, "This new rule will significantly improve the safety of construction workers who enter confined spaces. In fact, we estimate that it will prevent about 780 serious injuries a year."

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries indicates that an average of 92 fatalities occur in confined spaces per year, over 60 per cent of those involved were would-be rescuers. Workers in the construction injury frequently perform work in confined spaces, which are work areas that: are large enough for an employee to enter, have limited means of entry or exit, and are not designed for continuous occupancy.

The protections offered by this construction industry rule are similar to those which have existed in the manufacturing and general industry for more than 20 years. However, there are some differences integrated in order to tailor regulations specifically to the construction industry. Some of the requirements include ensuring that multiple employers share important safety information by using the technologies that surfaced after the manufacturing and general industry standards were introduced.

Confined spaces present both physical and atmospheric hazards which can only be controlled by following strict safety guidelines prior to entering the space in order to safely perform on the job. Hazards may include toxic air, insufficient oxygen, an explosive atmosphere, and falling, crushing, and drowning injuries and fatalities.

Safety while working in confined spaces requires a thorough plan involving permit-acquisition, work planning, space and hazard identification, chain of command, and rescue procedures. OSHA will put this rule into effect beginning August 3, 2015.