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Eye on Safety

Inside this issue:

Workplace driver safety program 1

Safety focus: Working with chemicals 3

Practice mindfulness for better health 4

Workplace driver safety program



Vehicle crashes are a leading cause of workplace fatalities. Whether crashes occur when employees drive fleet vehicles or during employees' daily commutes, any crash can have a significant impact on the workplace.

There is no OSHA rule on company vehicle safety, but the agency does recommend that employers have an effective workplace driver safety program to reduce the risks.

Goals of a company vehicle safety program

Sometimes driving is part of the job, and like every other task, it has to be done safely. A workplace company vehicle safety program can:

- Save lives and reduce injuries;
- Protect company resources (people and property); and
- Reduce liability risks.

As part of the program, the employer:

- Hires capable drivers, and allows only eligible drivers to drive on company business;
- Sets up rules for using seat belts and following other traffic laws;
- Provides ongoing driver training;
- Rewards safe drivers;
- Enforces employee compliance with the program; and
- Encourages employee input to improve the program.

Protecting company resources

Company resources include both people and property. The company vehicle safety program protects resources by:

- Selecting only safe vehicles for the company's fleet;
- Ensuring vehicles are only used as they were designed to be used;
- Conducting regular vehicle inspections; and
- Ensuring vehicles are properly maintained by qualified mechanics.

Reducing company liability risks

Certain liabilities come with vehicle ownership. The company vehicle safety program makes sure:

- Vehicles and drivers are adequately insured;
- Drivers and vehicles comply with all applicable licensing and traffic laws;

(continued on page 2)

**National Institutes of Health
Office of Research Services
Division of Occupational
Health and Safety**

Providing a safe and healthy environment for employees, patients and visitors.

“Safe science and good science go hand-in-hand.”

The articles in this Newsletter are intended to provide general summary information to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) community. They are not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. It is not NIH's intention to provide specific advice to readers of this Newsletter, but rather general information to help better understand how to prevent or reduce workplace injuries and illnesses. Reference in this Newsletter to any specific commercial products, process, service, manufacturer, or company does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government or NIH. This is not an NIH publication.

Workplace driver safety program *(continued from page 1)*

- Drivers and vehicles meet company standards; and
- Repairs are made by qualified mechanics.

Basic strategies for safe driving

As a driver, you have to put safe driving techniques into practice each time you get behind the wheel. You should:

Make sure the vehicle is safe to operate;

- Bring supplies you may need in case of an emergency;
- Wear your seat belt;
- Drive defensively, not aggressively;
- Pay attention to your driving and avoid distractions;
- Only drive when you're alert and fully awake; and
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol, medications, or illegal drugs.

Vehicle inspection procedures

Safe driving starts before you turn the ignition key. Always inspect the vehicle before you start your trip. Make sure:

- The vehicle does not have any visible damage that affects its safe operation.
- The tires are properly inflated (use the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations that are typically noted on a sticker inside the door, glove box, or trunk; the pressures stamped on the tire are not specific to the vehicle). Check the pressure when the tires are cold.
- Tires have sufficient tread depth (tread depth should be at least 1/16 inch).
- The vehicle's fluid levels are correct (oil, brake, transmission, battery, and wiper fluids).
- Belts and hoses are free of blisters, cracks, and cuts.
- The vehicle has plenty of fuel.
- The windshield wipers are in good condition and are functional.
- You are familiar with the location and operation of all the vehicle's controls; and the seat, steering wheel, and mirrors are properly adjusted.
- Headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, and interior lights are working.
- The seat belt is properly adjusted, and it's in good condition.
- The vehicle is equipped with an emergency kit.
- Tools, equipment, and personal items are secured in place.

Plan for emergency situations

Bring a kit of emergency supplies to use in case the vehicle breaks down or you become stranded due to weather conditions. Some basic provisions can include:

- A phone and a list of emergency phone numbers;
- First aid supplies;
- Roadside warning triangles or flares (follow instructions for their safe use);
- A fire extinguisher;
- Water and food;
- Clothing (raincoat; warm coat, hat, mittens/gloves, warm socks; comfortable boots/shoes);
- Basic car maintenance tools (including a flashlight with fresh batteries; battery jumper cables; a jack, lug nut wrench, and spare tire; pliers; screwdrivers; a wrench; a knife; water for the radiator; oil; windshield wiper fluid; rags; gloves; etc.); and
- Blankets, candles, matches, and extra cash.

The kit should include anything you anticipate you could need if you were stranded where help was not immediately available. In case of a breakdown or accident, your first actions should be to move the car to a safe area, remain in the car (if there is no risk of fire or other danger), and call for help.

You can help

Employees should be part of the program. Provide input as the program is developed and offer suggestions to improve it.

The program will have many policies and procedures. Understand and agree to follow the program's policies for seat belt use, reporting collisions and moving violations, restricting alcohol and drug use, driver eligibility requirements, vehicle inspections, collision investigations, disciplinary action, incentive programs, employee performance reviews, training program participation, etc.

Your employer might review your motor vehicle record to make sure you are eligible to drive a company vehicle. If you have moving violations, are involved in collisions, or violate the program's policies, you may face disciplinary/corrective action and/or lose your company driving privileges.

You should inspect the company vehicle before each trip. Know how to report defects you notice while driving. Be prepared for emergencies. Join in whenever driver safety training programs are offered.

Always drive safely. Help the program be successful.



Safety focus: Working with chemicals

Millions of workers are potentially exposed to chemical hazards each year. Chemical products can pose serious problems for exposed workers if not handled correctly.

Physical and Health Hazards

Physical hazards are exhibited by certain chemicals due to their physical properties — flammability, reactivity, etc. These chemicals fall into the following classes:

- Flammable liquids or solids;
- Combustible liquids;
- Compressed gases;
- Explosives;
- Organic peroxides;
- Oxidizers;
- Pyrophoric materials (may ignite spontaneously in air at temperatures of 130°F or below);
- Unstable materials; and
- Water-reactive materials.



A chemical may also cause acute or chronic health effects after exposure. An acute health effect usually occurs rapidly, following a brief exposure. A chronic health effect is long-term and usually follows repeated long-term exposure. Examples of chemicals which exhibit health hazards are:

Type of chemical	Example
Carcinogens (cause cancer)	formaldehyde or benzene
Toxic agents (poisonous)	lawn and garden insecticides, arsenic compounds
Reproductive toxins	thalidomide or nitrous oxide
Irritants	bleaches or ammonia
Corrosives (cause burns)	battery acid, caustic sodas
Sensitizers (cause allergic reactions)	creosote or epoxy resins
Organ-specific agents (act on specific organs/parts of body)	sulfuric acid (affects skin), or asbestos (affects lungs)

Chemical inventory list

OSHA's hazard communication standard requires that your employer develops a list of hazardous chemicals at your workplace as part of a written hazard communication program. The list should consist of all chemicals that are produced, imported, or used by your company.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Where is this list located and is the list complete?

- Are you using chemicals not on the list that might be new?
- In what way could you help your supervisor keep this list up-to-date?

If you check the chemical inventory and find that you are using chemicals not on the list, ask your supervisor about adding the chemical and performing a survey. A survey is the best way to ensure the list of chemicals is complete.

Surveys should be completed using the broadest possible perspective. Chemicals come in all physical forms—liquids, solids, gases, vapors, fumes, and mists—whether they are contained or not. Identify chemicals in containers, including pipes, but also chemicals that might be generated in your work operations like welding or exhaust fumes and dusts.

A list of all the potentially hazardous chemicals should be created. Read labels provided by suppliers for hazard information. For information and planning purposes, you may want to note the location(s) of the products, and an indication of the hazards found on the labels. The next step is to see if you have received safety data sheets (SDSs) for all of these chemicals. If any are missing, request them from the supplier. The SDS will provide critical safety, handling, storage, and emergency information.

If you have an SDS for a chemical not on your list, find out why. Maybe the chemical is no longer used, or you missed it in your survey. Some suppliers provide SDSs for chemicals that are not hazardous. You do not need to maintain these.

Chemical handling and personal protection

If you wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect yourself from hazardous chemicals on the job, you must be trained on its use and care. You must know when to use PPE as well as the jobs or tasks that require its use. Inspect PPE before wearing it. An emergency situation is not the right time to discover problems with PPE. If PPE becomes damaged during use, discard it or have it repaired if possible. Remember, PPE will only be effective if it is appropriate for the job and if it is in good condition.

Chemicals have the ability to react when exposed to other chemicals or certain physical conditions. Read the chemical label to learn how to properly handle and store chemicals.

Providing protection from chemical hazards is a challenging task because of the range of hazards and operations in which they are used. Do your part by becoming familiar with the chemicals you use and the ways in which you can protect yourself and others.

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a forum for the dissemination of health and safety information. It is intended to enhance communication to National Institutes of Health (NIH) employees, raise awareness of current safety policies and procedures, and provide guidance on relevant issues. It is provided as a service by the NIH, Office of Research Services, Division of Occupational Health and Safety. This is not an NIH publication.

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Practice mindfulness for better health

*"Do not dwell
in the past,
do not dream
of the future,
concentrate
the mind on
the present
moment."*

Buddha

Smartphones, computers, and other screen-focused technology make it easier than ever to disconnect from the world around us. However, paying more attention to what's going on outside that screen can be good for your health.

Mindfulness involves being aware of what's happening around you and how this makes you feel. It means being present in the current moment of time. Practicing mindfulness can aid in relaxation, and may help you manage stress and reduce anxiety.

Mindfulness can be practiced throughout the day. Try it by paying attention to your breathing, your fingers typing, or the sounds you hear while on a walk.

If your mind is racing, notice those thoughts. Then return to the moment.

Becoming a more mindful person takes practice. You can learn more through yoga and meditation classes, books, or mindfulness-based stress reduction programs.

Be mindful each day by:

- **Breathing deeply.** Breathe in through your nose and count to four. Hold for one second and exhale through your mouth to a count of five.
- **Taking a walk.** Look around and take note of what you see and hear. It's fine



to notice thoughts or worries that enter your mind; take note of them, and then return to the present.

- **Eating mindfully.** Focus on the flavors and texture in each bite of food. Recognize the feeling of fullness. Eat more slowly and be more aware. Think about why you want to eat? Are you truly hungry or are you bored or stressed out. Perhaps you could take a walk or do something else instead.

By practicing mindfulness, you may notice that you become more grateful for what you are able to accomplish in this moment. The ability to walk, eat, and even breathe are all things we should appreciate, but that we take for granted.



*Take time out to
practice mindfulness.*