

Safety Newsletter

Merced County Schools Insurance Group

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

Spring 2018

SAFE SPRING TRAVELS

With better weather, you may make plans to go on fieldtrips, conference meetings, and maybe take time out to go on a road trip for a vacation or two. Be prepared as you travel.

- Rainy days- Spring showers brings slippery road conditions. Wet roads reduce your car's handling and increase the distance it takes to stop (up to 4 times normal stopping distance). Big puddles can also cut down on tire traction and could lead to hydroplaning.
- Winter road wear and tear- winter wreaks havoc on the roads. Snow plows, salt, and ice can all leave roads a bit battered. Once snow melts away, expect to drive over new potholes. Make sure to check road conditions. Some roads and bridges may even be closed for repair in the aftermath of a harsh winter.
- Animal activity- Animals are incredibly active during the spring. Some are emerging from hibernation, and others are entering mating season. This could mean that more animals are crossing streets and roaming around. This is especially important during the early morning and evening when animals are most active.
- More bicycles and pedestrians on the road- Spring also brings cyclists out of hibernation. Driving alongside cyclists can make traffic maneuvers, from turning right to parallel parking, more dangerous. Also, more pedestrians are also out and about enjoying the warmer weather. Remember to slow down when driving nearby schools, parks, and playgrounds.

Seasonal showers, migrating animals, and poor road conditions can create unpleasant complications out on the road. Use the above tips to your advantage and you'll be that much more prepared for any seasonal driving dangers that come your way.

HEAT STRESS- HYDRATING IS KEY. HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Our bodies are made up of 60 percent water. Water is an essential source and it keeps us functioning at optimal performance levels by regulating our core body temperature, carries key nutrients to vital organs and flushes internal toxins.

Whether walking to your car or performing a strenuous task at the jobsite, your body is always working to maintain a balance and sustain its core

temperature. Employees working outdoors must be extra careful when working in the heat. Not only do extreme temperatures take a toll on the body, they make workers way more susceptible to becoming dehydrated. Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Thirst
- Fatigue
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea, dizziness or confusion
- Excessive perspiration
- Hot, dry skin

Serious risks are associated with dehydration, including a heat-related illness. Heat-related illness can be minor like a heat rash, but it can quickly escalate to something more serious like a heat stroke and even death. So, how much water should you drink?

OSHA recommends one quart of water per hour of active work or exercise for the average adult. The key here is *active work* that produces sweat and perspiration. A quart of water per hour is the equivalent of 128 ounces (3.78 liters) every four hours at minimum. It is also suggested that the water intake be distributed over a period of time, such as every 15 minutes per shift. Too much water all at once is bad for your health, it can lead to water poisoning. It is important to sip slowly and over a period of time.

However, every worker is different. The exact amount of hydration intake depends on the individual. It's important to consider the following factors:

- Do you have an existing health condition like high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease? If so you may have different hydration requirements.
- Is the temperature hot? If you work indoors and there is a source of radiant heat coming from machinery and other power sources, take caution. It is very likely that you are managing the heat by sweating – and therefore losing moisture. These workers will need to hydrate more than those employees working indoors at a desk in the office.
- Is the environment new to the individual? The body is capable of adapting to its environment but time and acclimatization is required in both hot and cold environments.

Above all, prevention is key to minimizing the risks associated with the effects of dehydration.



FLU SEASON...IS IT OVER?

According to the Center for Disease Control the influenza activity continues to be an issue in the U.S. The number of people sick with flu has continued to decrease across the nation, but experts warn that the season is not over yet. The numbers of influenza cases during the week ending on March 24, 2018 show a slight decrease in reported numbers compared to the week previously, but is still relatively high in comparison to data from this time last year in 2017. Thus, experts report that we are not yet in the clear and flu season is not over.

Caused by viruses, flu is a contagious respiratory illness with mild to severe symptoms that can sometimes lead to death. People most at risk of developing serious complications from the flu include the elderly, young children, pregnant women and people with underlying medical conditions. Anyone at higher risk should see their doctors if they feel ill, the CDC recommends. Getting a flu vaccination is still recommended by the CDC. Other ways to prevent illness and the spread of germs and viruses include:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Hand washing will remove germs and viruses from your hands.
- Sanitize and/or disinfect frequently touched surfaces. These can include door knobs, light switches, and desktops for example. This will help keep the number of germs and viruses to a minimum in your classrooms, offices, and work areas.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth which can lead to exposure.
- Stay home if you're sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.
- Take care of yourself. Get at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Manage your stress, stay hydrated, and eat a well-balanced diet.

10 OUTDOOR SAFETY TIPS FOR SPRING

It looks like winter is finally coming to an end in most parts of the country. If the warmer weather means you'll be directing workers to get outside, clear winter debris, and get your facility ready for spring, make sure they do it safely.

Keep reading for valuable reminders for work safety – even for those of you who plan to spend the weekend gardening or doing other yardwork.

1. Wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes, and long pants when using lawn mowers and machinery.
2. Protect your hearing when operating machinery. If you have to raise your voice to talk to

someone who is an arm's length away, the noise can be potentially harmful to your hearing.

3. Make sure equipment is working properly.
4. Wear gloves to protect from skin irritations, cuts, and contaminants.
5. Use insect repellent containing DEET.
6. Follow instructions and warning labels on chemical and lawn and garden equipment.
7. Reduce the risk of sunburn and skin cancer by wearing long sleeves, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunshades. Use sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher.
8. Keep an eye on the thermometer and take precautions in the heat.
9. When working in hot weather, drink plenty of liquids. Avoid caffeinated beverages - as they are diuretics and cause you to lose fluid.
10. Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including high body temperature, headache, dizziness, rapid pulse, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.

PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS



The financial burden is enormous, with the cost of fall injuries estimated at \$70 billion annually, says the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). There's a common misconception that slip and fall injuries "just happen" and that, as a result, there's little that can be done to prevent them. But that's not the case.

The first step in preventing STFs is to understand what locations within your facility present the greatest potential for danger. Look for hazards:

- Slippery surfaces like gloss-finished tile and polished stone
- Holes or broken surfaces
- Uneven walking surfaces
- Poorly marked and/or lit walkways
- Wet surfaces caused by spills or poor drainage
- Slippery conditions due to mud, ice, or water during inclement weather

Fight these hazards with routine inspection and maintenance and action steps, including the following:

- Provide adequate lighting for all walkways.
- Maintain all flooring surfaces at all times.
- Use slip-resistant floor treatments, especially in areas that may get wet.
- Use "wet floor" signage.
- Keep spill cleanup supplies accessible.
- Make sure entry areas are properly maintained and that any mats are secured to the floor.
- Promptly investigate any incidents and document findings.