



YOUR SAFETY IN 2010



Wow, it's 2010. Not only have we entered into another new year, but another new decade as well. The changing of the calendars is not only a great time to reflect on our past, but also to plan for our future. And in no area is this more significant than the field of safety.

In this edition of the Paris Kirwan Employee Safety Newsletter, we will examine three safety related topics that should be considered of great importance to virtually every employee and every employer. These topics include:

The Most Frequent Accident

The Most Costly Injury

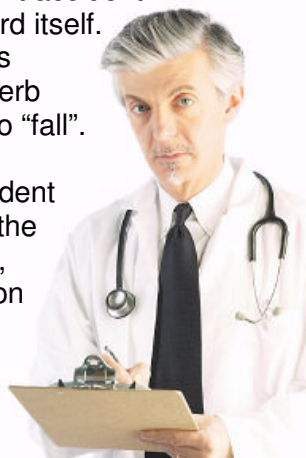
The Most Recognizable But Misunderstood Safety Device

If everyone reading this newsletter would seriously consider each, and put their knowledge into action, the end result would be a drastic reduction in injuries and insurance related claims for 2010 and beyond.

THE MOST FREQUENT ACCIDENT

What is the most frequent accident? The answer is in the word itself. The word "accident" was derived from the Latin verb "cadere" which means to "fall".

To put it plainly, an accident *is* a fall. And based on the most current injury data, a fall *is* the most common type of accident.



Falls come in many shapes and sizes.

Some result from slips on wet or icy walking surfaces. Others from trips on unlevel or improperly maintained walk ways. There are falls from slightly elevated surfaces (like a sidewalk curb), from moderately elevated surfaces (like a loading dock), and from higher elevations (like a loft or roof area). Falls can happen to most anyone at any age. Toddlers often wobble and fall when they are learning to walk. Young children often sustain injuries when they fall from a piece of playground equipment, or are learning how to ride a bike. Many serious injuries are reported by teens after they fall from rollerblades or skateboards. Young adults often get broken hearts when they fall in and out of love (but that's another story). Workplace injuries from all types of falls are commonly reported. And seniors must be extra careful, as falls and aging bones can lead to serious complications.

So what is the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your co-workers from falls? There are basically four simple "steps".

Step One: Be alert to the fact that falls are the *most* common accident and understand that they *can* be prevented.

Step Two: Get in the habit of continually observing walking (or climbing) surface conditions *before* you walk (or climb) on them. Many if not most falls occur because the individuals involved were not aware of the potentially hazardous conditions that existed.

Step Three: When it is within your ability, *correct* the unsafe condition or *alert others* to do so. For example, if there is a spill on the floor, clean it up or tell your Maintenance Dept.

Step Four: Always wear the *proper* foot wear. For example, if you work in a wet environment, wear shoes with slip-resistant soles.

When it comes to preventing the most frequent accident, ***always put your best foot forward.***

The Most Costly Employee Injury



Ask most any Human Resource Director or Insurance Claims Adjustor as to what the most costly Workers Compensation Injuries are, and you'll be sure to get this answer . . . "Back Claims". Each year in the United States alone, the cumulative costs related to these injuries are in excess of *fifty billion dollars*. That's a 5 with ten zeros behind it.

Back injuries in the workplace are generally related to improper lifting although some are also related to falls (see page one). And while the first cause of lost working time in the workplace is the common cold (or flu), the second leading cause is, you guessed it, back injuries. This, of course, makes it the leading accident-related cause of lost time.

Why is it that so many back injuries occur?

One reason is because there are so many different types of injuries that can be classified as a back injury.

Your back is composed of approximately thirty-three separate vertebrae and in between most there are "gel filled shock absorbers" known as disks. Your back also has a very complicated system of nerves, blood vessels, tendons, and ligaments which all must work in conjunction with each other. But whenever any of these components are stretched, torn, broken, worn, punctured or otherwise damaged, a "back injury" has occurred.

Why don't employers do something about it?

If back injuries lead to so many expensive claims, it would seem advantageous for an employer to try to prevent them. And they do. Many employers invest considerable sums of money to purchase and maintain material handling equipment, to set up programs and to perform training. But even at these places of employment, back injuries often can, and still do, continue to occur. The main reason why is that many employees *refuse* to take them seriously.

But when employees do take back injuries seriously, they can be significantly reduced or virtually eliminated. All it takes is for each employee to consider a "**basic lifting plan**" *before* each lift. What is a "basic lifting plan"? Well, simply this: before any object is physically lifted, the individual involved should size up the load, consider the travel path, and review the unloading zone. Let's look at each part below.

Sizing Up the Load basically involves examining the object's size, weight and shape, to determine how to best lift it alone and/or if some assistance is needed. Such assistance should then be obtained as/if necessary.

Considering the Travel Path is basically a visual review of the path to be taken. The purpose is to determine if there are any tripping hazards, stairways, sharp turns or the like *before* an object is transported, not *during*.

And **Reviewing the Unloading Zone** is simply making sure that there is a safe and secure place to set the object down.

Along with the above, employees need to implement standard lifting techniques including:

- (1) **Standing close to the object**
- (2) **Taking a wide stance**
- (3) **Bending with your knees, not your back**
- (4) **Grasping the item securely**
- (5) **Lifting with your legs and**
- (6) **Never twisting your body**

If every employee at your workplace was to use a "basic lifting plan" along with these common sense lifting techniques, your company could easily *lift* your safety program to the next level.

Recognized But Misunderstood

Safety devices can and do vary drastically from one workplace to another. For example, a fall protection harness that is used on a construction site would be of little value within a retail donut shop. An enclosed bagel slicer within a donut shop would be relatively useless within a paint booth. Respirators used within a paint booth would be . . .well hopefully you get the point. But there is one safety device that is useful at virtually *all* workplace locations. It is found in shops, stores, offices, restaurants, construction job-sites, schools, and even within vehicles of transportation. This device, in case you haven't guessed, is the portable fire extinguisher.



Portable fire extinguishers can be found almost everywhere. In fact, it would probably be a safe bet to assume that there is one within one hundred feet of you right now! But despite the fact that they are instantly recognizable by most people in the civilized world, they are also commonly misunderstood. To help with this dilemma, stated below are some of the common myths & misconceptions related to this safety device.

ANYONE CAN USE A PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHER

With some basic training, extinguishers are relatively simple to use. But in your workplace they should only be used by individuals who have been trained and authorized to do so.

PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS CAN PUT OUT MOST ANY SIZE FIRE

False, they are designed to fight small fires in their insipid (or early) stages. After the pin is pulled and the grip squeezed, the flow of the extinguishing agent lasts only a minute or two. Hardly enough time to put out a major fire.

ALL FIRE EXTINGUISHERS ARE BASICALLY THE SAME

This is not true. Fire extinguishers have different fire fighting capabilities based on the extinguishing agents they contain. For example, those rated as Class A are only to be used on paper, wood or ordinary combustibles. Those rated as Class C are only intended for electrical fires. "Multi-purpose" rated extinguishers will have multiple class ratings but will not work on all fires. It is important to know your fire extinguishers and only use them on the fires for which they are intended.

WHEN FIGHTING A FIRE, STAND AS CLOSE TO THE FLAMES AS POSSIBLE

This is false for two reasons. If you stand too close, the extinguishing agent may actually spread the flames. In addition you may get burned. It is recommended that you stay at least six to ten feet away from the fire source.

BE SURE TO POINT YOUR EXTINGUISHER DIRECTLY INTO THE FLAMES

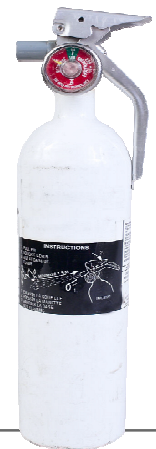
Never do this. Extinguishers should be pointed at the base of the flames and moved back and forth in a sweeping motion. Just shooting into the flames will do little if any good.

IF THERE IS A LOT OF SMOKE, BE SURE TO HOLD YOUR BREATH

Wrong. If there is excessive smoke, get away from the fire as quickly as possible and leave the fire fighting to the professionals.

AFTER YOU EXTINGUISH A FIRE, LEAVE THE AREA AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

Not true! Unless there is danger to you, like excessive smoke, stay in the area for at least 20 minutes and have a "fire watch". Fires often re-ignite and, if so, you will be there to promptly re-extinguish the flames.



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