

Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc.

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

In This Issue

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Bad Safety Habits

Sprains and Strains



Southern California Trade
Contractors Association,
Inc

Administrator

Mark Hebson
22925 Arlington Ave Ste 1
Torrance, CA 90501

Call Toll Free
(800) 530-9662
FAX 310-530-0081
www.socattrade.com

Bad Safety Habits

The word safety refers to your freedom from danger, injury and damage, and to your personal security. It's what America was founded on. It's what everyone wants, but doesn't always get. It requires a lot of effort to have and to keep.

In recent years there has been a concentrated effort in our country to reduce accidents and save lives -- in the process, the word safety has been used so often that many of you may think of it as a "Preaching Word", or a word that forces you to alter your ways or change bad habits.

Instead, when you hear the word safety, think of it as a word that applies to the way you do everything in life. If you have bad safety habits, you're just not doing things as well as you should!

For example: If you are driving safely, you're simply operating your vehicle as intended and obeying the laws, no more, no less. If you are working with a power tool that requires eye protection, don't fight it. Safety glasses are simply a necessary accessory to the proper use of that tool. If you're at home, take the time to use a ladder instead of standing on a chair that was made to sit on.

Today is the best time to think about your bad safety habits and then correct them. Improving your bad safety habits will require concentration and effort, but the results will help make you a more responsible and desirable employee, improved driver, and a good example to those around you -- and your bonus for this effort is - a greatly reduced chance of becoming an accident statistic this year.

**SPRAINS AND STRAINS IN THE
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

The days of macho behavior and contests to see who can do the most work or lift the heaviest load are hopefully gone! Companies that allow behavior like this to exist find themselves out of business because accidents and injuries-and worker's compensation insurance costs-skyrocket.

The answer is in planning: In the dynamic construction industry, controlling exposures to sprains and strains is difficult at best. With this in mind, anyone who spends a good part of their work day moving materials should learn to work smarter, rather than harder!

Manual material handling is common to many industries, especially construction. Many tasks that require handling sheet goods, such as plywood siding or sheet rock, require two people for installation. Experience working together as a team is the best way to assure you know what your partner is doing. When starting with a new partner, take time to discuss how you intend to lift, carry and secure your work. A single wrong move with a heavy sheet can transfer the full load to one of the workers, force an awkward position, and cause a sprain or strain.

When working from scaffolding, take time to plan your moves. How will you get the material in place? Will you have to move it around the scaffolding manually? Do you need mechanical help such as a fork lift or a boom truck? Can you place material in several locations to minimize the need to lift and carry? All of these situations should be considered before starting a task.

When loading or unloading materials or tools, avoid bending, twisting or carrying long distances. If it's possible, avoid placing materials at heights below knee level or above shoulder level. Never twist with a load!! This is one of the worst things that you can do to your back. If you combine bending and twisting, you are certain to injure yourself. Always allow space for at least two steps between a truck being off loaded and the final stacking site, which helps avoid twisting. Place a couple of pallets under a pallet you are stacking, which avoids bending below knee height.

Shoveling: When using a shovel, alternate having your left hand and right hand forward. It may feel awkward at first, but allows muscles on both sides of your body to share the work. Keep

in mind that muscles and posture control the shape of your spine. The shape of your spine controls wear and tear on your spinal disks, muscles and ligaments.

Repetitive motion: Tasks that require repetitive hand or wrist motion should be examined closely. Steady use of a screw driver means constant twisting of the wrist. Battery operated screw guns are a good answer for this. Driving nails all day can cause pain in both your elbow and wrist. Wooden handles tend to transmit less vibration than steel and fiberglass hammer handles. Consider wearing a tennis elbow support, to limit the effect of vibration on tendons that attach to the elbow. When using vibrating tools, special gloves that "dampen" vibration can also be worn.

Problem-solve and plan with others: The first step to avoiding discomfort, pain or injury is to discuss awkward work tasks with your supervisor. Also, share your concerns and possible remedies with co-workers at safety meetings. Remember, the best way to earn a living is to stay healthy. Your employer-and most of all, your family-are depending on YOU!



FARMERS

SOCAT continues it's very successful relationship with Mid-Century Insurance Company-a part of Farmers Insurance Group