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Start With Safety

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November Starts the Holiday Season!

The holiday season is here! For many this means trying to juggle parties, shopping, hosting, planning and traveling all while attempting to keep a balanced work schedule. There's a good chance your employees will lose focus and momentum in the office increasing the chances for accidents.

There are so many competing demands and expectations during the holidays that it is very easy to get overwhelmed. Many people lose focus during the holiday season because their to-do list swells while their time shrinks. Travel planning, guest preparations, gift shopping, children's events, parties and so on, must be crammed into already-full schedules, which causes stress. Personal stress often affects work performance and can diminish productivity and increase the chances of accidents.

Another reason employees see a dip in productivity at work during the holidays is due to colleagues and managers being away on vacation. It can be extremely difficult to get things done and maintain a high level of productivity when people are out of the office, and the workflow subsequently slows down.

The holidays are a time to emphasize focus on workplace safety. At this time of year, people can be distracted or tired and may be teaming with people they do not ordinarily work with due to others taking time off. Working with someone new, especially at high-risk jobs, may be a recipe for disaster. It is important to ensure all employees are properly trained and qualified for the tasks they are being asked to perform, especially if a task is not within their normal job activities.

In addition, with all of the joy, parties, and excitement the season brings, employers need to be especially vigilant to keep and maintain a safe workplace for employees, customers, and other third parties. A distracted or inebriated employee may be an employee at risk, which may in-turn, bring liability onto the employer. The holidays are a good time to remind employees of drug and alcohol policies and to be on the lookout for violations of those policies.

The holidays are also a time when your employees may be at risk for workplace violence, both from within the company and from third parties. Many employees will be excited about the time spent with friends and family, but many others may not have those opportunities. Be aware of the signs of a distressed and potentially violent employee.

However, if you do manage to maintain focus through the chaos, it gives you a chance to stand out. With lower and fewer expectations from your otherwise distracted coworkers, you can also use this time to get caught up on your important, but not urgent, tasks.

*Remember what the holidays are all about. Keep in mind the holiday season is for celebration. **A safe and joyful holiday season is a choice, not a given.***

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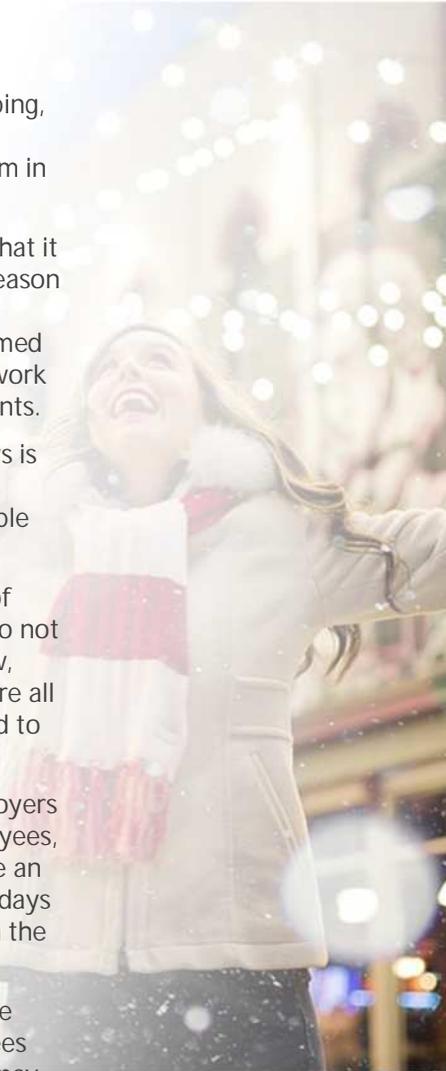
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For more information or to join us for the November session of Safety Academy, visit us at catto.com and reserve your seat.



SAFETY ACADEMY
PREVENTING ABUSE

FRI, NOV 9
8:00AM

Texas Sets Workers' Comp Weekly Benefit Rates

The workers' compensation state average weekly wage for dates of injury from Oct. 1, 2018, through Sept. 30, 2019, has been set at \$937.70, the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation reports. The maximum weekly benefit rates for workers' compensation income benefits is set at \$938 and the minimum weekly benefit rate is set at \$141 for that period. The maximum and minimum weekly benefit rates for dates of injury from Oct. 1, 2017, through Sept. 30, 2018, were \$913 and \$137 respectively. In accordance with Texas Labor Code §408.047, the workers' compensation state average weekly wage is equal to 88 percent of the average weekly wage in covered employment as computed each year by the Texas Workforce Commission under Labor Code §207.002(c).

Home Safety Tips for the Holidays

Holiday safety is an issue that burns brightest from late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes. Take some basic precautions to ensure your family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.

Traveling Troubles. Many people choose to travel during the holidays by automobile, with the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation. In 2015, 355 people died on New Year's Day, 386 on Thanksgiving Day and 273 on Christmas Day, according to Injury Facts 2017. Alcohol-impaired fatalities represent about one-third of the totals. Use a designated driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; alcohol, over-the-counter or illegal drugs all cause impairment. Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled. Put that cell phone away; many distractions can occur while driving, but cell phones are the main culprit. Properly maintain the vehicle and keep an emergency kit with you. Be prepared for heavy traffic, and possibly heavy snow.

Decorating Dangers. Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency rooms see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season. "Angel hair," made from spun glass, can irritate your eyes and skin; always wear gloves or substitute non-flammable cotton. Spraying artificial snow can irritate your lungs if inhaled; follow directions carefully. Decorate the tree with your kids in mind; move ornaments that are breakable or have metal hooks toward the top. Always use the proper step ladder; don't stand on chairs or other furniture. Lights are among the best parts of holiday decorating; make sure there are no exposed or frayed wires, loose connections or broken sockets, and don't overload your electrical circuits. Plants can spruce up your holiday decorating, but keep those that may be poisonous (including some Poinsettias) out of reach of children or pets; the national Poison Control Center can be reached at (800) 222-1222. Make sure paths are clear so no one trips on wrapping paper, decorations, toys, etc.; NSC provides tips for older adults on slip, trip and fall protection.

Giving Goofs. Choosing toys that don't present a choking hazard for infants or small children isn't the only gifting concern. Select gifts for older adults that are not heavy or awkward to handle. Be aware of dangers associated with coin lithium batteries; of particular concern is the ingestion of button batteries. See which toys have been recalled by visiting the Consumer Product Safety Commission blog.

Fire Fears. Thousands of deaths are caused by fires, burns and other fire-related injuries every year, and 12% of home candle fires occur in December, the National Fire Protection Association reports. Increased use of candles and fireplaces, combined with an increase in the amount of combustible, seasonal decorations present in many homes means more risk for fire. Never leave burning candles unattended or sleep in a room with a lit candle. Keep candles out of reach of children. Make sure candles are on stable surfaces. Don't burn candles near trees, curtains or any other flammable items. Don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace. Check and clean the chimney and fireplace area at least once a year.

Turkey Terrors. While many subscribe to the theory any fried food is good – even if it's not necessarily good for you – there is reason to be on alert if you're thinking of celebrating the holidays by frying a turkey. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports there have been 168 turkey-fryer related fires, burns, explosions or carbon monoxide poisoning incidents since 2002. CPSC says 672 people have been injured and \$8 million in property damage losses have resulted from these incidents. NSC discourages the use of turkey fryers at home and urges those who prefer fried turkey to seek out professional establishments or consider a new oil-less turkey fryer.

Poisoning Perils. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides some holiday food safety tips. Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature. Refrigerate food within two hours. Thanksgiving leftovers are safe for four days in the refrigerator. Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating. When storing turkey, cut the leftovers in small pieces so they will chill quickly. Wash your hands frequently when handling food.

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