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SafetyWorks! Newsletter for a Safer Workplace, Summer 1998

Maine Department of Labor

Maine Bureau of Labor Standards

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A Simple Highway Safety Program In Your Workplace Will Reduce Your Company's Risks

Motor vehicle crashes are the primary cause of death and injury in the United States. Of the 124 work-related fatal accidents in Maine from 1991-1996, 26 were due to highway accidents.

Statistics show that a work-related crash resulting in injuries will cost an employer more than $24,000 and an off-the-job crash will cost the same employer more than $18,000. With high costs like these, starting a highway safety program is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways of reducing injuries and their related costs.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have developed a 15-page booklet, "Set Up a Simple Highway Program and Save." By instructing employees in basic traffic safety techniques including motor vehicle, safe pedestrian, bicycle, and motorcycle techniques and then rewarding safety conscious behavior, you can help your employees and their families avoid tragedy.

Success Stories

The booklet describes some of the successes experienced by employers across the country, including:

The Central Ohio Transit Authority in Columbus, Ohio began a mandatory eight-hour refresher course for all bus operators, implemented an awareness program, and started an annual drivers awards program. From 1990 to 1995, they reduced the number and frequency of crashes.

The Jaynes Corporation in Albuquerque, New Mexico began pre-employment screening for crashes, speeding tickets, drunk driving, and other moving violations; provided driver education to all drivers; conducted crash investigations; and offered incentives and rewards for good driving. Since Jaynes started their program, crashes have dropped by 25 percent. The company has saved more than $500,000 in insurance premiums and claims paid annually.

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Highway Safety (continued from page 1)

contained in the booklet are six simple steps that will lead to significant cost savings. Ideas, examples, and strategies are offered for each of the six steps.

1) Obtain management’s commitment
2) Identify your costs
3) Develop an action plan
4) Implement highway safety policies
5) Implement an awareness campaign
6) Evaluate your program

HOW TO ORDER

For a copy of “Set Up a Simple Highway Safety Program and Save,” write to Media and Marketing Division, NHTSA, NTS-21, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590 or send a fax to (202) 493-2062.

For more information about NETS, visit the NETS Web site at http://www.trafficsafety.org or call the NETS coordinator in Maine, Steve Wilson of the Maine Safety Council, at 854-8441.

Choosing the Right Shades

After a day of summertime driving, do you sometimes notice your eyes get tired? What you need is a good pair of sunglasses.

Dr. George S. Bournakel, Optometric Associates, Lewiston, shares his expertise in sunglasses. Gray is the best lens to choose because it is neutral and doesn’t distort colors. The gray cuts the glare down and keeps the ultraviolet light out. Brown sunglasses also work well; however, they will change the perception of color.

Dr. Bournakel suggests buying a high-quality lens, but price isn’t always an indicator of quality. Lenses are now labeled to tell the customer how much ultraviolet light the lens absorbs. Buy lenses that absorb at least 95 percent of the rays. Be wary of lenses that are pressed or molded because they are poor quality and can cause headaches. Everyone’s sensitivity to light is different, and a visit to your optometrist may be in order.

Vehicle Safety Defects

If you are concerned about a vehicle safety defect, call the DOT Auto Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236 or find them online at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline.


MDOL Launches New Safety Initiative

Governor Angus King, wearing an honorary hard-hat, leaves the podium after helping launch MDOL’s new “SafetyWorks!” program. The kickoff took place on June 1 at Fairchild Semiconductor in South Portland. Nearly 100 businesses were on hand as the Governor and MDOL Commissioner Valerie Landry unveiled the new logo and outlined program initiatives. For more on the program, see page 4.

SafetyWorks!

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Earn a Degree on the Internet

You may earn a degree or a certificate in Occupational Safety and Health from Central Maine Technical College (CMTIC) over the internet. To participate you will need to apply to CMTIC, have access to a computer with CD-ROM, e-mail, a web browser and internet access. For more information, contact Tom Ryan or contact the Admissions Office at (207)-784-2385.

Drowsy Driving

Workers with allergies and colds often take medications to get them through the day. Some medications may make them drowsy. For workers who are also motor vehicle operators, medications that make them drowsy could endanger themselves and their co-workers.

Statistics from the Maine Department of Transportation show that eight fatalities in 1996 were attributed to either fatigue or the driver falling asleep. Some people don’t realize that they are on the verge of falling asleep or deny that they are feeling drowsy. Keep yourself from nodding off at the wheel by taking the following precautions:

- Heed warnings on medicine labels
- Don’t start long trips after working all day.
- Always start fresh.
- Don’t drive for long stretches at night. Your body’s natural rhythms will tell you when to sleep—pay attention!
- Stop every hour or two to get out of your vehicle and stretch a bit. This abrupt action will break up the hypnotic lull of the road.
- Periodically turn the cruise control off. Stay actively involved in your driving.

**Don't Be in the Dark About Safe Night Driving**

While more accidents occur during the day than at night, more of the nighttime accidents are fatal, according to data collected by the Maine Department of Transportation. How can you make sure you reach your destination safely?

- Before you drive anywhere at night, check to make sure all your lights—front and rear—are in operating condition.
- Turn your headlights on whenever visibility is less than 500 feet.
- Never over-drive your headlights. Speeds that are safe in the daytime are not always safe at night. Make sure that you can stop within the distance illuminated by your lights.
- Take it slow and easy when going around curves. Remember that your headlights don’t bend with the curve.
- Never look directly into the headlights of an oncoming car. Instead, look slightly to your right and to the edge of the road.
- Dim your headlights whenever you’re within 500 feet of an approaching car, or when you’re following a car at a distance of less than 300 feet.
- When driving in fog, use your dim lights to prevent dangerous reflection.
- If you must pull over to stop at the edge of the road at night, keep your parking or low-beam lights on.

**Sun Protection Poor Among Workers**

Half of Americans with outdoor jobs do not protect themselves adequately against the sun’s cancer-causing ultraviolet radiation.

According to findings from two California studies of postal carriers, construction, and transportation workers, the face—where skin cancer occurs most often—and lower arms were typically the least-protected body sites.

Researchers from San Diego State University’s Graduate School of Public Health note that ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun is the major risk factor for both deadly melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers.

The researchers found that people who work outdoors may receive six to eight times the dose of UVR of indoor workers. Of the outdoor workers, less than one-third reported wearing sunscreen on the day they completed the survey.

The researchers state that policies and procedures are needed to promote UVR protection among outdoor workers.

Protective strategies proposed by health organizations, include using protective clothing, shade, and sunscreens with a 15+ Solar Protection Factor (SPF) and avoiding UVR exposure between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.


**Safety Sites on The Web**

- **Insurance Institute for Highway Safety**
  www.hwysafety.org/press/pr041498.htm
- **Safety Online's Safety Challenge**
  www.safetyonline.net/safechal/safechal.htm
- **OSHNET's Violence in the Workplace**
  www.osh.net/vio.htm
- **Teen Worker Safety**
  www.dol.gov/dol/opa/public/summer/employer.htm
- **Network of Employers for Traffic Safety**
  www.trafficsafety.org
- **Injured Workers**
  www.miwa.org

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Articles for SafetyWorks! are written by individual authors and are not necessarily products of the Bureau of Labor Standards or its editors. Information contained in the articles should not be seen as a substitute for policy or for regulations.

The editors are Lynne Lamstein, Director of Outreach and Education; Jonathan Lepoff, Staff Development Coordinator; and Bradford Brown, Statistical Program Supervisor. You may reach them by calling 624-6400. For more information about SafetyWorks!, use our toll-free number: 1-877-SAFE-345.
Welcome to “SafetyWorks!”

I’m proud to launch the latest Maine Department of Labor initiative to improve occupational safety and health in Maine—SafetyWorks! This new initiative is designed to make workplace safety and health information, training and consultation available at no cost to every business in Maine.

SafetyWorks! is aimed at raising awareness of the need for continued improvement in workplace safety and increasing the number of businesses taking advantage of the no-cost services.

As part of the new initiative, the former “Safety and Health Monitor” will now be known as the SafetyWorks! newsletter.

The services are the same high quality services the department has been offering the Maine community for years: on-site consultation, training, phone consultations, video lending library, and much more. However, the SafetyWorks! program will now make sure that everyone who can benefit from these free services knows about them and knows just how easy they are to request.

It’s easy to reach SafetyWorks! with our new toll-free telephone number: 1-877-SAFE-345.

Look for our new logo to be popping up around the state. And give us a call today, because SafetyWorks!