

SAFETY TALK SEASONAL TRANSITION HAZARD AWARENESS

Transitioning between work seasons poses many different challenges for employees in the transportation and construction industry. Winter Weather causes employees to be focused on more sedentary work in enclosed environments where the risk of exposure to work related hazards decreases. When warmer weather arrives, employees are now exposed to work activities that put them at greater risk of accidents and injuries. PennDOT keeps internal records on accident trends isolating the top accidents and injuries that occur during March, April, and May.



1. OVEREXERTION INJURIES:

Most common injury type in transportation/construction.

Leading Causes:

- Repetitive movements
- Improper technique
- Extreme temperatures
- Lifting, moving, or carrying heavy items (greater than 50 pounds)
- Repeated or long-term bending or twisting
- Reaching for items at a higher level
- Poor posture (sitting/standing)
- Prolonged activity of a specific activity

Types of Injuries:

- Sprains
- Strains
- Back injuries
- Joint injuries

Prevention/Safety Tips:

- Use proper lifting techniques.
- Ask for help when lifting or carrying items.
- Improve ergonomics in your workplace.
- Ensure proper tools and Personal Protective Equipment are used.
- Stretch before working in awkward positions or with repetitive motions.
- Rest and hydrate when working in temperature extremes.

2. SLIP, TRIPS, AND FALLS:

Typically found in both office and field locations and can affect all employees.

Leading Causes:

- Weather conditions/wet floors
- Obstructed walkways
- Poor housekeeping
- Uneven surfaces
- Loose or unstable flooring
- Cluttered walkways
- Loose cables and wires
- Poor or broken lighting
- Inadequate footwear
- Lack of training and awareness

Types of Injuries:

- Sprains/strains,
- Broken bones/fractures
- Tendon or muscle tears
- Dislocations
- Contusions
- Soreness

Prevention/Safety Tips:

- Maintain clean and dry floors.
- Ensure proper lighting
- Keep walkways clear
- Wear proper footwear
- Shovel walkways promptly after snowfall to prevent ice buildup.
- Train employees and use safety tools to prevent incidents in the workplace.

3. PINCH POINT HAZARDS:

A pinch point is any place where a body part might get trapped between moving and stationary parts of a machine or piece of equipment. Pinch point is a mechanical hazard.

Leading Causes:

- Between handles
- Rolling or moving pipes
- Truck/plow attachments
- Between two pieces of equipment and/or vehicles
- Power presses
- Truck tailgates
- Doors and cab compartments

Types of Injuries:

- Amputations
- Lacerations
- Contusions
- Crushing of tissues and bones
- Head injuries
- Shattered bones

Prevention/Safety Tips:

- Ensure proper guarding is in place.
- Do not place your hands where you cannot see them.
- Wear the proper gloves for whatever work task you are completing.
- Follow lock out tag out procedures.
- Properly block any equipment or parts where stored energy could be released.
- Make sure to communicate with others that you are out of the danger zone before moving/starting equipment.

4. CONTACT WITH SHARP OBJECTS:

Occurs when workers encounter sharp objects, tools, or machinery.

Leading Causes:

- Sharp edges on vehicles
- Machinery
- Sharp metal objects/signs (Steel cables wires chains, nails, broken glass)
- Power tools
- Hand tools
- Flying objects or debris

Types of Injuries:

- Puncture wounds
- Cuts/lacerations
- Abrasions

Prevention/Safety Tips:

- Use of proper PPE, such as hand, eye, and face protection.
- Do not place your hands where you cannot see them.
- Wear the proper gloves for whatever work task you are completing.
- Regularly inspect tools for damage and defects that can cause an injury.
- Proper Housekeeping of work areas.
- Train workers on common sharp hazards and provide first aid training.

Employees and supervisors understanding of the hazards that they face during seasonal transitions is the first step in preventing accidents and injuries. The next crucial step is providing everyone with prevention strategies and controls to reduce their exposure risk. Lastly, management must be vigilant with providing adequate training while enforcing the policies and protocols. This will substantially improve employee safety and allows for a safety culture that makes safety "priority number 1"!