BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

OSHA Announces Safe + Sound Week, August 13-19, 2018

What Is Safe + Sound Week? A nationwide event to raise awareness and understanding of the value of safety and health programs that include management leadership, worker participation, and a systematic approach to finding and fixing hazards in workplaces.

Why Participate? Safe workplaces are sound businesses. Successful safety and health programs can proactively identify and manage workplace hazards before they cause injury or illness, improving sustainability and the bottom line. Participating in Safe + Sound Week can help get your program started or energize an existing one.

Who Is Encouraged to Participate? Organizations of any size or in any industry looking for an opportunity to show their commitment to safety to workers, customers, the public, or supply chain partners should participate.

How to Participate? Participating in Safe + Sound Week is easy. To get started, go to www.osha.gov/safeandsoundweek/. Select the activities you would like to do at your workplace. You can host an event just for your workers or host a public event to engage your community. Examples of potential activities and tools to help you plan and promote your events are available. After you've completed your events, you can download a certificate and web badge to recognize your organization and your workers.

Need more inspiration? Watch a webinar to get ideas from organizations that participated in last year's event. The webinar can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWsx8uuVJ5k&feature=youtube.Safe and Sound Week helps to promote Safety and Health programs. It has been statistically proven that safe workplaces are sound business. **Every workplace should have a safety and health program** that includes management leadership, worker participation, and a systematic approach to finding and fixing hazards.

Why Health and Safety Programs? According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of worker deaths and reported injuries in the United States has decreased by more than 60 percent in the past four decades since the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act was passed. However, every year, more than 5,000 workers are killed on the job (a rate of 14 per day), and more than 3.6 million suffer a serious job-related injury or illness.

Serious job-related injuries or illnesses don't just hurt workers and their families, but can hurt business in a variety of ways. Implementing a safety and health program, however, can improve small and medium-sized businesses' safety and health performance, save money, and improve competitiveness. Safety and health programs help businesses:

- Prevent workplace injuries and illnesses
- Improve compliance with laws and regulations
- Reduce costs, including significant reductions in workers' compensation premiums
- Engage workers
- Enhance social responsibility goals
- Increase productivity and enhance overall business operations

If you are interested in getting a more defined Health and Safety Program started at your company, reference https://www.osha.gov/safeandsound/docs/SHP_10-Ways-to-Get-Started.pdf for helpful hints. If you have an existing program, but would like to measure its effectiveness or look for areas of improvement consider working through OSHA's evaluation tool, Recommended Practices for Health and Safety Programs, https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/

Information Provided by OSHA's Safe + Sound Webpage, https://www.osha.gov/safeandsound/
and Safety Share Working on or Near Water
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Monthly Toolbox Talk

BIE Safety Advisor

Working Safely Near Water

This months Tool Box Talk is focused on working safely near water. The inspiration for this topic is very personal. Within a short time frame, two members of my extended family were adult victims of drowning. While neither of these were work related accidents, it highlights the risk of activities on or near the water.

Many construction projects find us working near water. Historically, the most notable project involving work on or near water was the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, where cofferdams were used extensively and diving to the depths of the river to locate appropriate foundations for supporting the bridge. Today there are many tunnels and bridges that traverse waterways. Unfortunately, this type of work is dangerous, where there have been countless fatalities and serious injuries throughout the United States. OSHA has established specific safety standards and clarifications for construction work activities performed during these events.

The bottom line is that there are always unique jobsite situations and safety issues that must be recognized and addressed prior to working over or near water. OSHA standards that address this type of work include lifesaving skiffs, buoyant work vests, and fall protection. Affected personnel must recognize these provisions so that the most obvious hazard associated with working near or on water, drowning, is properly identified.

Within OSHA's Construction Standard, Subpart E (Personal Protective and Life Saving Equipment) is the OSHA standard for "Working Over or Near Water (29 CFR 1926.106). This regulation states: "Employees working over or near water, where the danger of drowning exists, shall be provided with U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets or buoyant work vests. Prior to and after each use, the buoyant work vests or life preservers shall be inspected for defects, which would alter their strength or buoyancy. Defective units shall not be used." OSHA has determined that, when continuous fall protection is used to prevent employees from falling into the water, the employer has effectively removed the drowning hazard, and life jackets or buoyant work vests are not needed. However, OSHA has insisted that life jackets/vests are required even if the water level is less than 2 feet deep.

While personal fall arrest systems (i.e. full body harness and a properly anchored lanyard with shock absorption capabilities) is considered adequate protection while working over water, OSHA has determined that in such cases as bridge construction, safety nets will not eliminate drowning hazards due to the potential of heavy materials and equipment falling on the nets and causing damage to the nets. This would be considered a potential risk of the net not being able to protect persons from falling through the net. In such cases the personal flotation device and the other applicable requirements of 29 CFR 1926.106 apply.

If a worker should fall into the water, OSHA requires (29 CFR 1926.106(c)) that ring buoys with at least 90 feet of line shall be provided and readily available for emergency rescue operations. The distance between ring buoys shall not exceed 200 feet. Another remedial action required by OSHA (29 CFR 1926.106(d)) is the use of lifesaving skiffs. OSHA requires that at least one lifesaving skiff shall be immediately available at locations where employees are working over or adjacent to water and must include the following provisions:

- The skiff must be in the water or capable of being quickly launched by one person.
- At least one person must be present and specifically designated to respond to water emergencies and operate the skiff at all times when there are employees above water.
- When the operator is on break another operator must be designated to provide requisite coverage when there are employees above water.

With regard to the number of skiffs required and the appropriate maximum response time, the following factors must be evaluated:

- The number of work locations where there is a danger of falling into water;
- The distance to each of those locations;
- Water temperature and currents;
- Other hazards such as, but not limited to, rapids, dams, and water intakes