CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Driving Safely in Traffic

Motor vehicle accidents account for more deaths than all natural disasters combined. And the more cars there are on the road, the greater your chances of having an accident. Just because you aren't on a job site doesn't mean that your safety isn't just as important. Unless you're careful enough to avoid accidents in traffic, you may not be lucky enough to make it to the job site.

Avoiding accidents in traffic is a little different than avoiding accidents on the open road. Long-distance drivers know that fatigue is responsible for numerous accidents. But what are the dangers of driving around town, making frequent stops?

Many people spend a lot of time on the road as they are working. On any city street you are likely to see delivery vans, couriers, salespeople, and utility persons making frequent stops as they conduct their business. Some people spend many hours in traffic just going to and from work. Even though the mileage may be small, the amount of time spent on the road is very long. Every hour spent on the road increases your chance of having an accident.

Certainly **speed** is a factor in accidents. Many accidents happen simply because the driver is going too fast. City streets usually have speed limits of less than 25 miles per hour, and often you will see posted limits as low as 5 or 10 miles per hour. Speed limits are carefully selected to minimize the chances of accidents. When traffic is heavy, there just isn't very much distance between you and the next vehicle to stop. The slower you're going, the less distance it will take to stop. By going slowly, you will also be able to observe your surroundings more easily, taking note of cyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicles. Observing the speed limit is one sure way to reduce your chance of an accident. On rainy, foggy, or snowy days, keep your speed even lower.

Perhaps the main cause of accidents in traffic is a simple matter of **not paying attention**. In traffic, it is easy to become distracted, frustrated, and annoyed. Any of these can cause you to pay less attention than you should, often resulting in rear-end collisions when the vehicle in front of you stops. If you don't pay attention, you're more likely to run stop lights and stop signs.

Sometimes **paying attention to the wrong things** causes accidents, too. Eating, talking on a cell phone, or reading addresses on buildings, street signs, and maps while driving can lead to accidents. You will be better off if you find a place to pull over safely while you do these things. Avoid having to read a map at all, by pinpointing your destination before you begin driving.

Fatigue is also a contributor to traffic accidents. After a long day's work, or perhaps a morning when you didn't rest well the night before, you are likely to feel tired. Feeling tired causes you to become distracted easily, and also slows your reflexes. Don't take chances driving when you feel too tired to be safe. If fatigue is a frequent problem, see your doctor. For occasional fatigue, combat it with adequate rest, nutrition, and exercise.

To drive safely in traffic you must keep your speed down, pay attention, and avoid driving when you are tired. Many accidents and injuries could be prevented by following these precautions. Next time you're in traffic, remember these things and keep yourself safe!

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls

Did you know that slips, trips, and falls are second only to automobile accidents in causing personal injury? On stairways alone, falls result in almost two million disabling injuries per year. There are thousands more minor injuries caused by slips, trips, and falls each year. Most alarming of all is the fact that industrial falls cause over 1000 deaths each year. But there are simple things that can be done to prevent slips, trips and falls. Most of these suggestions can be used on the job and at home.

Many factors can cause a slip. Ice, oil, water, cleaning fluids, and other slippery substances are probably the most obvious causes. However, the flooring may be inappropriate; perhaps it is a slick material, or the person who slips may not be wearing proper shoes. To prevent slips, avoid walking in areas that pose slipping hazards if at all possible. Always promptly clean up spills of slippery substances, and even better, work to prevent the spills in the first place. If a particular area is a chronic problem, re-route foot traffic to avoid it. If flooring is a problem, replace it or coat it with a non-slip surfacing material. Always follow your company's safe shoe policy. Most safe shoe policies require a slip-resistant sole.

The main cause of tripping is obvious: anytime something is in a walkway it could cause someone to trip. Another culprit is an object projecting into a walkway -- perhaps material stored low on a shelf. Poor lighting and uneven walking surfaces may also cause tripping. Preventing trips is simple, but it does require diligence. Keep objects that could cause someone to trip out of the way. Repair uneven flooring and install proper lighting if required.

Falls can be caused by a number of things, and slips and trips frequently result in falls. Improper use of ladders and scaffolding can result in a fall -- usually a very serious one. Falls also happen when people climb objects without using fall protection equipment. Don't risk serious injury by taking shortcuts. If you are working on a ladder, scaffold, or other elevated platform, make sure you know the requirements for using them safely. Always use fall protection equipment when it is required.

Slips, trips, and falls cause numerous injuries every day. But they are among the easiest hazards to correct. Take the time to look around your work site for these hazards and work to prevent them. Take care not to cause any slip, trip, or fall hazards as you go about your daily activities.

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Practicing Good Hygiene on the Job

There's more to good hygiene than smelling good and looking nice. When you're working with chemicals or other hazardous substances, the word "hygiene" takes on a much greater meaning. The goal of good hygiene on the job is to prevent accidental exposures caused by inhaling or ingesting hazardous substances. By practicing the following seven hygiene practices when working with hazardous substances, exposures caused by accidental cross-contamination can be prevented.

Smoke, eat, and drink only in designated areas, away from locations where hazardous materials are used or stored. Small amounts of those substances may be present in the area, and smoking, eating, and drinking nearby will cause you to inhale or ingest the hazardous material. You should always wash before smoking, eating, or drinking if you have been working with hazardous materials.

Keep work clothes clean and in good condition. Holes or tears will allow hazardous materials to get on your clothes or skin, increasing the likelihood that you will be exposed to these substances.

Do not mix contaminated clothing with your home laundry. Not only will this cause cross-contamination, but it is possible to cause a fire if these clothes are laundered. Find out what to do with your contaminated clothing before you leave work. Many companies have an industrial laundry facility specifically for contaminated clothing.

If you splash hazardous materials on your eyes, skin, or clothing, wash promptly in the proper manner, even if you have no apparent symptoms. The MSDS will provide information about what to do in case of splashes. Of course, the best time to look at the MSDS is before you use the substance, not when an emergency happens.

Always wash before you apply makeup, lotion, lip balm, or gloves. Applying these to contaminated skin is likely to cause an accidental exposure.

Remove contact lenses when working in an area where vapors are present. Contact lenses absorb substances from the air, causing eye irritation and other potentially serious conditions.

Keep hazardous material storage areas clean. In case of a spill, the area should be cleaned according to proper spill control and clean-up procedures. Materials used to clean up the spill must also be disposed of properly.

These practices help keep hazardous materials away from and out of your body. None of them are difficult to do. Perhaps the hardest thing about practicing good hygiene on the job is to overcome bad hygiene habits. After all, you may not notice a health effect right away after eating or smoking in a hazardous materials area. Over time, because of chronic exposure to hazardous materials caused by these bad habits, you may begin to suffer from health effects. If you are aware of any personal bad hygiene habits, remember that your good health is at risk because of it. Begin to change those bad habits today!

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A Word About Shortcuts

All of us have exposed ourselves to possible injury by taking shortcuts, when just a few extra seconds would have meant doing something the safe way. As children, we jumped the fence instead of using the gate. Today as adults, we cross streets between intersections instead of at corners.

But these minor safety violations, which we may not give a second thought, may have serious consequences. In our work, taking shortcuts can be deadly. Take the example of an ironworker who tried to cross an opening by swinging on reinforcing rods. His hands slipped, and he fell 20 feet to his death a concrete floor. But if he had taken a few moments to walk around the opening, he would probably still be alive today.

The safe way is not always the shortest way. However, choosing the safe way is your personal responsibility. Your work in any area always requires you to take the safe route -- not some shorter or more dangerous one.

If there is no safe access to a particular job assignment, make sure that safe access is provided. Ladders or scaffolds are provided for high work. Use them. Even though a high job may take only a few minutes, do not climb on false work or use an improvised platform. Steps, ladders, or ramps are provided to get you from one elevation to another. If they are not already provided, take time to have them installed.

Your first responsibility is to yourself. Remember that ladders, steps, and walkways are built to save you trouble and to help prevent injury. If you see anyone taking shortcuts, warn them of the dangers involved and alert your supervisor.

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Protecting Your Hearing

Most of us take our senses for granted, and we don't often give our hearing much thought. But most people suffer some degree of hearing loss, and once your hearing is gone, it doesn't come back. Farmers, construction workers, people exposed to constant loud noise on the job, whether at home or through their hobbies (even fans of loud music!), have at least one thing in common. They are at risk of permanent hearing loss. It's important to understand what causes hearing loss and how it can be prevented.

Exposure to normal noise levels doesn't cause hearing loss -- overexposure to high noise levels does. Noise is measured in units called "decibels." The higher the decibel, the louder the noise. To help you see the difference in the decibel scale, look at these examples of various noise levels:

- **20 decibels - soft whisper**
- **30 decibels - leaves rustling, very soft music**
- **60 decibels - normal speech, background music**
- **85 decibels - heavy machinery with a soundproof cab**
- **90 decibels - lawnmower, shop tools**
- **100 decibels - heavy machinery without a soundproof cab, motorcycles**
- **115 decibels - loud music, sand blasting**
- **140 decibels - jet engine, shotgun**

In the workplace, hearing protection must be used to reduce noise exposure for anyone who is exposed to 90 decibels or more throughout the course of a workday. Hearing protection may be used at lower levels, particularly for people who are very close to the 90 decibel exposure level. Sounds above 120 decibels can cause hearing damage after only a brief exposure and should be avoided unless hearing protection is worn.

There are many types of hearing protection available, but keep in mind that not every type of hearing protection is good for every type of noise. Disposable foam earplugs may be fine for some noise exposure. Earmuff-type protection may be suitable for another.

It is the employer's responsibility to assess noise exposures and provide appropriate hearing protection as needed for everyone in the workplace. It is the worker's responsibility to use the protection consistently and correctly. Hearing protection is no use if it's not worn.

Keep in mind that equipment operators aren't the only ones who may need protection. Other people who work nearby may also be overexposed to noise. If you work in a noisy area -- even if you're not the one making the noise -- be aware of the hazard of hearing loss, and use protection.

Another thing that might cause unnecessary noise exposure is poorly-maintained equipment. Keeping equipment properly lubricated and in good condition helps keep down the noise. If you become aware of noisy equipment that hasn't been noisy before, report the condition so proper hearing protection can be provided until necessary repairs are made.

Away from the workplace, hearing protection is solely your responsibility. Don't risk your hearing for the sake of a hobby. Keep the music at a reasonable level. If other people tell you your stereo is too loud, it probably is! If you ride a motorcycle or another noisy vehicle, protect your hearing. In your workshop, use hearing protection that's appropriate to protect against the noise.

Think of those sounds you take for granted and imagine life without them. Don't let unnecessary exposure to noise take them away. You can do something to help protect your hearing. Take the time to know what protection to use and use it faithfully. Your hearing can last a lifetime with a few common sense precautions.

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Why is Accident Prevention Important?

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), construction is one of the most hazardous industries. Estimates of the number of fatalities range from several hundred to over 2,000 per year, and there seems to be no predictable trend as to time of year, day of week, or even age. Falls represent the largest percentage of causes at 33%, followed closely by electrical shock.

Now do you see why it's important to prevent accidents? Accident prevention is much more than a way of keeping your company happy and your supervisor off your back. It may just prevent injury or your becoming disabled -- it may even save your life.

A safety program is designed to help you reach your goals. It is not there just to make your work harder, or slower, or to meet some governmental guidelines. Safety and accident prevention programs are designed to PROTECT YOU so that you may reach your personal goals. When an unsafe act is pointed out to you, it is done so to help you by eliminating obstacles or job hindrances AND to ensure that you get home all in one piece.

Every time you approach a project, every time you pick up a tool, every time you start a piece of equipment or machinery, think SAFETY. Look for what can go wrong and eliminate that possibility BEFORE your goals come to an abrupt end.

TAKE SAFETY PERSONALLY: MAKE IT A PART OF YOUR LIFE GOALS.

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Safe Use of Compressed Gas Cylinders

Compressed gases present several hazards. Labels on the cylinder and the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) supplied with the cylinder tell you about the hazardous properties of the gas, such as whether it is toxic, flammable, or an oxidizer. In addition to the gas hazards, compressed gas cylinders pose other hazards related to containment under pressure.

Regardless of the properties of the gas, any gas under pressure can explode if the cylinder is improperly stored or handled. Making a balloon fly around by suddenly releasing the air is amusing, but a flying cylinder is not so funny. The principle is the same for both a balloon and a compressed gas cylinder. Improperly releasing the gas from a compressed gas cylinder is extremely dangerous. A sudden release of the gas can cause a cylinder to become a missile-like projectile, destroying everything in its path. Cylinders have been known to penetrate concrete-block walls. To prevent such a dangerous situation, there are several general procedures to follow for safe storage and handling of a compressed gas cylinder:

- Store cylinders in an area specifically designated for that purpose. This area must protect the cylinders from being struck by another object. The area must be well-ventilated and away from sources of heat. It must be at least 20 feet away from highly combustible materials. Oxidizers must be stored at least 20 feet away from flammable gases.

- Cylinders must not be dropped or allowed to fall. Chain and rack them in an upright position during use and storage. Secure cylinders from falling during transport.

- When moving a cylinder, even for a short distance, all the valves must be closed, the regulator removed, and the valve cap installed. Never use the valve cap to lift a cylinder. If you are using a crane or some other lifting device to move a cylinder, use a cradle or boat designed for that purpose. Never use a sling or a magnet to move a cylinder.

- Never permit cylinders to make contact with live electrical equipment or grounding cables.

- Cylinders must be protected from the sun's direct rays, especially in high-temperature climates, as well as from ice and snow accumulation.

- Before the gas is used, install the proper pressure-reducing regulator on the valve. After installation, verify the regulator is working, that all gauges are operating correctly, and that all connections are tight to ensure that there are no leaks. When you are ready to use the gas, open the valve with your hands. Never use a wrench or other tool. If you cannot open it with your hands, do not use it.

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Preventing Heat Stress

Conditions of heat put your body under a lot of stress. Physical activity stresses the body even more. When heat is combined with physical activity, loss of fluids, fatigue, and other conditions, it can lead to a number of heat-related illnesses and injuries. Death is even possible.

Heat stress is commonly associated with warm weather. It's true that warm weather increases the number of heat-stress injuries and illnesses, but warm weather isn't the only cause of heat stress. It can also occur any time the surrounding temperature is elevated. Even if the weather is cool, you may work in warm areas, indoors or out. Be alert for conditions that could cause heat stress, and take precautions to prevent it. Six main factors create heat stress:

- temperature
- humidity
- movement of air
- radiant temperature of the surroundings
- clothing
- physical activity

Adjusting to these factors and/or controlling them reduces the chance of heat stress.

Your body can adjust to working in a warm environment through a process known as "acclimatization." Check with your company's safety personnel for the exact way to properly acclimatize yourself. Acclimatization processes involve gradually increasing the amount of time you spend working in a hot environment. This gradual increase allows your body to properly adjust to the heat.

Keep in mind, though, even if you're already acclimatized, conditions can change, which stresses your body even more. Bright sunshine, high humidity, and sources of heat in the workplace can affect your body's ability to cool itself. If conditions change, make sure you re-acclimate yourself to the new conditions. If you're away from work for a few days, or if you experience a brief period of cooler temperatures while working, you will need to re-acclimate yourself before you try to work a full shift in hot conditions.

Engineering controls can be implemented to reduce the possibility of heat stress. These include:

- controlling the heat source through use of insulation and reflective barriers
- exhausting hot air or steam away from the work area
- using air-conditioning
- using air-conditioned rest areas
- using fans to circulate the air
- reducing the physical demands of the work by using mechanical equipment

Administrative controls are also effective to prevent heat stress injuries. These include:

- increasing the frequency and duration of rest breaks
- scheduling tasks to avoid heavy physical activity during the hottest parts of the day
- providing cool drinking water or an electrolyte-replacement drink, and encouraging its consumption
- using additional workers for the job or slowing down the pace of the work
- making sure everyone understands the signs and symptoms of heat stress

Common sense precautions, such as dressing properly for the job, include:

- wearing lightweight clothing, which allows moisture to evaporate quickly
- wearing reflective clothing or cooling suits for jobs that require them

- using extra caution if you are required to wear clothing on the job that limits evaporation -- you could succumb to heat stress much more quickly

Preventing heat stress is a matter of controlling the factors that cause it. Use the precautions mentioned here, and don't hesitate to seek assistance if you suspect heat stress in yourself or others.

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Scaffolding Safety

Scaffolding allows you to do your job at elevated heights. It includes suspended systems from buildings, supported systems from the ground, and aerial systems on mobile equipment. Without proper training, your work on a scaffolding system puts you at risk for falls, or for being hit by falling objects, both of which could cause serious or even fatal injuries.

To prevent falls, scaffolding equipment should be properly installed and operated by qualified personnel, who should study the load, bracing, and safety code requirements for each job site. Properly designed scaffolding systems have work levels that are decked with regulation-sized planks and have appropriate worker access. Depending on the height of the scaffold, fall protection can include safety harnesses, guardrails, or toe boards.

An OSHA-defined "competent person" should inspect the scaffolding before each use to see that it is in good condition and operable. Scaffolding should be plumb, level, and in firm contact with a stable surface. The scaffolding should be sturdy, with all nuts and bolts tightened. Damaged or improperly constructed equipment should not be used. To avoid electrocution hazards, power lines should be at least 12 feet away the scaffold. Visit the OSHA web site for a list of requirements for a "competent person."

Before a scaffold job begins, all workers on the site should receive training on that particular scaffolding system. This should include receiving all required personal fall protection equipment, as well as training in how to correctly wear the protection device, how to inspect it before each use, and how to recognize when the equipment should be removed from service.

While on the scaffold, keep your body belt or harness system drop lines away from sharp surfaces and corrosive materials, which may weaken the protection device and cause it to fail. Secure drop lines to separate sturdy anchor points on structural members of the scaffolding.

Only climb the scaffolding from designated areas on the structure, or on properly installed ladders. Practice good climbing techniques on your own, including facing the rungs when climbing up or down; using tool belts or approved hoists to carry materials up to the job site, thus allowing the use of both hands; and establishing solid footing and balance before climbing the structure.

Practice safe behaviors on scaffolding at all times.

- Only one person should stand on an individual plank at a time.
- Materials should not be hoisted or placed on cantilevered platforms, unless they are designed for it.
- Bridges between scaffold towers should not be constructed, unless an OSHA-defined “qualified person” has designed them.
- Be aware of activities taking place overhead, and try to keep tools away from the edges of the scaffold and platform openings, so they don’t drop on workers below.

With proper training and education in scaffold systems, fall protection equipment, and proper scaffold work practices, you can work and feel safe at elevated heights.

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Using Jacks Safely

One of the easiest pieces of equipment to operate in any industry is the jack. Many people think there is nothing more to operating a jack than to putting it under the load, inserting the handle, and jacking away. But every year there are hundreds of workers who are seriously hurt because they didn't use the jack correctly. To avoid having an accident of your own, follow these simple, basic rules:

1. Use a jack with a rated capacity that equals or exceeds the load you're lifting.

2. Always set the jack on a firm and level foundation.

3. To prevent slipping, use a wooden-block softener between the head of the jack and the load.

4. Set the jack perpendicular (at a right angle) to the load.

5. If there is a chance the load will swing to the side, install props or guys before doing any lifting.

6. Have enough help when you install or move a jack.

7. When you're working on a floor of any kind, make sure the load limit of the floor isn't exceeded.

8. Before working under a raised load, install blocking to keep the load from accidentally falling.

9. Keep jacks in good shape and well lubricated, but only lubricate at the points where lubrication is specified. Check for broken teeth and other defects. Never throw or drop jacks.

10. When a jack develops any defect at all, turn it in for repair, and be sure to test it under a load before putting it back in service.

A jack can slip out from under a load before you have to time get out of the way. Make sure you are using your jack safely. By following these simple rules, you can keep from becoming an accident statistic.

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Safety for Mechanics

The timeliness of any project depends on equipment that works properly. Time is money. Having mechanics on site to perform repairs or maintenance in a safe and timely fashion can be tricky when they're surrounded by a lot of people and construction activity.

Mechanics should always follow these safety precautions for every job:

1. Never depend solely on jacks or chain hoists to support any vehicle that you have to work underneath. Use blocks.

2. Use electric extension lamps and portable electric tools only when cords and fittings are in good condition.

3. Be sure your feet are clear of passing automobiles or moving machinery when you get under a vehicle.

4. Guard against carbon monoxide gas from the exhausts of running engines. See that there is proper ventilation.

5. Do not leave gasoline standing in open containers. Whenever possible, use Stoddard Solvent or other relatively safe preparations to clean parts.

6. Don't attempt to lift anything too heavy for you. Get help or use a hoist.

7. Keep wrenches and other tools you use in safe working condition.

8. Keep a pair of safety goggles handy and wear them when doing any work in which eye protection is necessary.

9. Be sure that mechanics' creepers are in safe operating condition.

10. Never consider a job complete until you have checked to make sure that all lock washers and cotter pins are in place.

11. Never allow grease and oil to remain on the floor where you or others might slip and fall on it.

12. Always keep a suitable fire extinguisher nearby and ready for use.

Safety on any job site is your top priority. Never cut corners to save time, if it means that it could result in a hazardous situation.

Safety Meeting Report

DATE:_____PROJECT:_____
CONDUCTED BY:_____
TOPIC:_____
ADDITIONAL TOPICS:_____
COMMENTS:_____

Meeting Attendance

(PRINT AND THEN SIGN YOUR NAME TO THE RIGHT)

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(ATTACH ADDITIONAL REPORTS FOR ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES)

Using Portable Electric-Powered Tools Safely

Failing to properly use and maintain electric-powered tools causes thousands of cuts, punctures, pinches, amputations, and electrocutions each year. Tools can seriously injure or kill the user if not properly maintained or used. Everyone who uses tools must learn to recognize the hazards associated with different types of tools, and the safety precautions necessary to prevent those hazards. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has specific rules for using electric-powered tools. Following these guidelines, along with using your own good judgment, will help keep you safe.

Before you use a tool:

- Verify that it bears an electrical test label indicating that it successfully passed inspection and tests for electrical safety within the previous six months.
- Know the application, limitation, and potential hazards of the tool. Operate according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Inspect the cord to verify it is the proper type. Electric-powered tools must either have a three-wire cord with ground or be double insulated. Never use a plug that has its ground prong removed.
- Inspect the tool for frayed cords, loose or broken switches, and other obvious problems. Tools that fail this inspection must not be used. These must be removed from service and labeled "Do Not Use" until repairs are made.

When using the tool:

- Do not use electric-powered tools in damp or wet locations.
- Keep guards in place, in working order, and properly adjusted. Safety guards must never be removed when the tool is being used.
- Avoid starting a tool accidentally. Do not hold a finger on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool.
- Safety switches must be kept in working order and must not be modified. If you feel it necessary to modify a safety switch for a job you're doing, use another tool.
- Work areas should have adequate lighting and be free of clutter.
- Observers should remain a safe distance away from the work area.
- Be sure to keep good footing and maintain good balance.
- Do not wear loose clothing, ties, or jewelry when operating tools.
- Wear appropriate gloves and footwear while using tools.

Servicing and storing tools:

- Never modify a tool for use on a job it's not intended to do.
- Disconnect power tools while servicing or storing.
- Do not wrap the cord around the tool for storage.
- Store tools in a dry place.

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CLP SKILLED TRADES SOLUTIONS

Understanding Safety Signs

Signs are used to prevent accidents. They are common in the work area, along the roadside, and in public buildings. OSHA has some specific requirements for signs. The requirements are in place to make sure hazard warnings are easy to recognize and don't vary from workplace to workplace. Let's take a look at different types of signs, what they mean, and how they should be used.

OSHA defines signs as "the warnings of hazard, temporarily or permanently affixed or placed, at locations where hazards exist." Danger signs must only be used where an immediate hazard exists. Their appearance is specified by OSHA. These signs are red, black (or contrasting color), and white with room for words or symbols to describe the danger. Danger signs are common in areas where high voltages exist and where automatically-starting equipment is in use. You may be aware of other hazards that warrant the use of a danger sign.

Warning signs are orange with black (or a contrasting color) lettering or symbols. They are used to warn against hazards that aren't quite as serious as those requiring a danger sign, but are more serious than those requiring a caution sign. Warning signs may alert us to forklift traffic or similar hazards.

Caution signs must be used only to warn against potential hazards or to caution against unsafe work practices. Caution signs are predominately yellow with a black (or contrasting color) panel at the top of the sign. The word "caution," written in yellow, appears on the panel. The lower part of the sign is used for additional wording, which must be written in black (or a contrasting color). Caution signs warn of numerous hazards -- everything from slippery floors to reminding us to wear safety glasses. Even traffic signals take a cue from the yellow caution sign, as they warn us to be careful on the road.

Special signs are used just for biological hazards and radiation hazards. The biological hazard (biohazard) sign is fluorescent orange or orange-red with letters or symbols in a contrasting color. The biohazard sign alerts us to the presence or potential presence of blood or other biological hazards. Radiation hazards are identified with a sign bearing the familiar three-bladed radiation symbol in black, magenta, or red on a yellow background.

Safety instruction signs are used to provide information about safety. They are not used to warn against specific hazards. These green and white signs remind you to report accidents, help locate first-aid equipment, and direct you along an evacuation route.

Though signs are never a substitute for good safety procedures and training, they are useful to remind us of hazards and ways we can protect against them. Always take seriously the information on a sign -- whether in the workplace or on the road. Understanding signs and the hazards they warn us about can help prevent injuries and save lives.

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