

This monthly e-newsletter provides updates on the Workplace Safety Programs of the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC). Both subscribers and non-subscribers of workers' compensation insurance are eligible for these services.

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Transportation Safety Information

Merging and Passing

According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), there were 26,111 crashes, including 42 fatalities, involving vehicles that changed lanes when unsafe in Texas in 2013. Lane change techniques and signaling correctly are important skills to learn and implement to help ensure your safety on the road. The following tips can help employees who drive on the job avoid these types of incidents.



ben earwicker @ garrison photography

- Monitor the rearview mirror, which gives a much wider view than those provided by your side mirrors. Watch for traffic coming up faster than you are driving and for vehicles signaling to change lanes behind you, as they may be increasing speed to pass your vehicle. Turn your head and take a quick glance over your shoulder to ensure there is no other driver in the lane beside you.

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Safety Tips

New Final Rule for Confined Spaces in Construction

In May 2015, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced a new final rule for confined spaces in construction (the upcoming 29 CFR 1926, Subpart AA standard). This final rule brings standards for working in confined spaces in construction into alignment with permit-required confined spaces in manufacturing and general industry.



sooperkuh@everystockphoto.com

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Transportation Safety Information (cont.)

Merging and Passing (cont.)

- Eliminate blind spots on the sides of your vehicle by readjusting your side mirrors. For the driver's side mirror, lean your head against the window, and then adjust your mirror outward so that when you look at the inside edge, you barely see the side of your car. For the passenger's side mirror, position your head above the center console, and adjust the mirror so that you can barely see the side of your car on the inside edge of that mirror. Make sure you become oriented with the newly adjusted settings before heading into traffic, and then monitor side mirrors routinely while driving.
- Make sure the roadway is clear before merging, passing, or changing lanes.
- Communicating with other drivers is the most important part of defensive driving. Use your turn signal continuously for at least 100 feet before you change lanes so that other drivers can see that you are merging into their lane.
- Make sure you are going at the same speed as the traffic into which you are merging. Anticipate traffic slowing down or stopping to avoid a rear-end collision or clip while merging.
- Change lanes smoothly and avoid cutting in too quickly if you must return to your original lane.
- Watch for other drivers making unexpected moves. Do not take anything for granted and get into the habit of anticipating the worst.
- Do not zigzag through traffic.
- Do not drive in other vehicles' blind spots. When you pass a vehicle, get past its blind spot as quickly as possible.
- Maintain a safe distance behind other vehicles and take into consideration weather and road conditions.
- Always plan an escape route so that you can avoid potential accidents.

Incorporate defensive driving into your daily driving habits. Make sure these are skills you practice every day – your life may depend on it.▲

Download!

DWC Resources

The DWC offers the following free driving safety publication:

- *Driving and Merging Collision Prevention FactSheet*

This publication, available in both English and Spanish, can be downloaded from the agency website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/targtransrtd.html>, along with over 30 other driving safety publications.

The DWC features a free occupational safety and health DVD loan library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>. DVDs on many driving dangers can be found under the following headings:

- *Driving Safety*;
- *Transportation Safety* (includes safe operation of buses and vans); and
- *Trucking Safety* (covers professional trucking, both straight trucks and tractor trailers).

Other Resources

The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration offers safety resources on its agency website at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety offers road safety resources, aggressive driving resources, distracted driving resources, and statistics on its website at <http://trafficsafety.org>.

The Governors Highway Safety Association offers news, up-to-date information on state distracted driving laws, planning tools, and other safety resources on its website at <http://www.ghsa.org>.

TxDOT offers brief safety advice on a number of topics ranging from aggressive drivers to work zones on its website at <http://www.txdot.gov/driver/share-road.html>.

The Texas Department of Public Safety's *Texas Driver's Handbook* provides safety tips and information about driving laws on its website at <http://www.dps.texas.gov/internetforms/Forms/DL-7.pdf>.

Safety Tips (cont.)

Confined Spaces (cont.)

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there were 33 fatalities related to confined spaces in 2013, with six of those fatalities occurring in Texas.

The new rule will be effective on August 3, 2015, and requires employers to determine the following:

- what kinds of spaces their employees work in;
- what hazards exist for those spaces;
- how those hazards should be made safe;
- what training employees should receive; and
- how to rescue those employees if anything goes wrong.

There are five key differences between the general industry rule and the new construction rule, as well as several areas where OSHA has clarified existing requirements in the general industry standard.

The five new requirements for the construction rule include the following:

- more detailed provisions requiring coordinated activities when there are multiple employers at the worksite;
- requiring a competent person to evaluate the worksite and identify confined spaces, including permit spaces;
- requiring continuous atmospheric monitoring whenever possible;
- requiring continuous monitoring of engulfment hazards; and
- allowing for the suspension of a permit, instead of cancellation, in the event of changes from the entry conditions listed on the permit or an unexpected event requiring evacuation of the space.

In addition, OSHA has added provisions to the new rule that clarify existing requirements in the general industry standard. These include:

- requiring that employers who direct employees to enter a space without using a complete permit system prevent employees' exposure to physical hazards through elimination of the

hazard or isolation methods such as lockout/tagout;

- requiring that employers who are relying on local emergency services arrange for responders to give the employer advance notice if they will be unable to respond for a period of time; and
- requiring employers to provide training in a language and vocabulary that the employee understands.

Several terms have also been added to the definitions for the construction rule, such as "entry employer" to describe the employer who directs employees to enter a space, and "entry rescue," added to clarify the differences in the types of rescue employers can use.

OSHA has created a Safety and Health Topics Pages for *Confined Spaces*, available on the OSHA website at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/confinedspaces/index.html>. Information on the new final rule is available at <https://www.osha.gov/confinedspaces/index.html>.▲

Download!

Other Resources

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) offers a number of resources such as facts, statistics, publications, and educational materials on its *Confined Spaces* topics webpage, available on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/confinedspace/>.

Regional Safety Summits



Corpus Christi — July 15, 2015

Region 2 Education Service Center

**209 N. Water Street
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401**

Waco — July 29, 2015

Region 12 Education Service Center

**2101 W Loop 340
Waco, Texas 76712**

Austin — August 12, 2015

Holiday Inn Austin – Town Lake

**20 North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78701**

The DWC is offering a series of Regional Safety Summits that provide affordable training and instruction on common causes of preventable injuries and fatalities in the workplace, as well as current and upcoming regulations in the occupational safety and health fields.

According to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), contact with objects and equipment surpassed falls to become the second leading cause of occupational fatalities, while falls, slips, and trips were the third leading cause of occupational fatalities in Texas in 2013. The Regional Safety Summits address these and other safety issues commonly encountered in the workplace. Attendees will be able to choose the sessions that are most valuable to them.

Session Descriptions

Elements of Effective Safety Programs

Effectively managing how you protect your employees at work is a key factor in reducing the frequency and severity of work-related injuries and illnesses and related costs. This session will provide attendees an understanding of the elements that are necessary to create an effective and comprehensive safety program in the workplace. The presentation will explore seven core components commonly found in effective safety programs; cover program best practices; and discuss the positive effects of implementation. (3 hours)

Requirements of a Comprehensive Hazard Communication Program

Exposure to hazardous chemicals in the workplace can cause or contribute to many serious health effects for employees. In addition, some chemicals may be safety hazards and have the potential to cause fires, explosions, and other serious accidents. A comprehensive hazard communication program will help employers and employees understand the effects of chemicals found in the workplace, how to prevent exposure, and what to do in an emergency if exposure does occur. Written hazard communication programs have specific requirements that must be met in order to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) General Industry standards. This session will cover OSHA's requirements regarding materials inventory, labeling, safety data sheets, and employee training. An in-class exercise will provide attendees an example of the information and skills needed to conduct training in their own workplace that complies with OSHA's requirements. (3 hours)

Session Options

Session Time	Option 1	Option 2
Morning	Components of an Effective Accident Prevention Program	OSHA Written Programs and Training Requirements
Afternoon	Requirements of a Comprehensive Hazard Communication Program	Walking and Working Surfaces, Exit Routes, and Emergency Action Plans

OSHA Written Programs and Training Requirements

This session will review the various OSHA required and suggested written programs and training topics, including lockout-tagout, emergency action plans, and hearing conservation. Attendees will gain an understanding of when written programs must be implemented, what must be covered when conducting training, and the frequency with which training should occur. (3 hours)

Walking and Working Surfaces, Exit Routes, and Emergency Plans

Slips, trips, and falls account for numerous workplace injuries every year. Maintaining clean, dry, and uncluttered work environments can help prevent many of these incidents from occurring. Part one of this session will explain OSHA's General Industry standards pertaining to walking and working surfaces, including requirements for floor and wall openings, loading docks, stairways and ladders, and general housekeeping.

Part two of this session will cover the OSHA requirements for exit routes, emergency action plans, and fire prevention plans. Attendees will learn the components, maintenance, safeguards, and operational features of exit routes as well as the essential elements of emergency action plans, fire prevention plans, and general fire protection best practices. (3 hours) ▲

Watch for Additional Regional Safety Summits Coming to a City Near You!

El Paso: August 2015

Amarillo: September 2015

Denton: October 2015

San Angelo: November 2015

Dates and locations TBA

Register!

To register, visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/regional.html> or call (512) 804-4610. The registration fee is \$50 per person (register five people and get registration for a sixth person free). Registration includes course materials, a compact disc with all four presentations, coffee, and afternoon snacks.

Custom Onsite Training

The DWC offers affordable safety training courses that can be delivered onsite to businesses, groups, and trade associations, with priority given to those industries or occupations that experience high incidences of injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in Texas.

The DWC offers more than 30 onsite courses, including the following:

Confined Space Entry

Upon completion of the program all students will have a working knowledge of the OSHA General Industry 29 CFR 1910.146, Permit Required Confined Spaces, to include how to put a confined space program together. The program will also cover all requirements and best safety practices for a confined space program. Program topics include definitions of a confined space and a permit entry confined space, confined space entry requirements, atmospheric testing, confined space program requirements, permit requirements for confined space entry, job duties and responsibilities of personnel involved in the process, and rescue and emergency services. *(Length: 1-2 hours.) Can be delivered via teleconference at no cost. (This program may be included in the Safety & Health Outreach Program – General Industry.)*

The DWC Training Program Descriptions guide located on the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/pubs/videoresource/ghsphstraining.pdf> provides information on course content and length. The cost for onsite training varies according to the travel costs to the training location. Many courses can be presented at no cost to any business/industry via teleconference or webinar. ▲

Book Your Training Class!

To request training, or for more information, call (512) 804-4610 or e-mail safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov.

Free OSHA 10-Hour Construction Classes

The DWC offers free OSHA 10-Hour Construction classes in both English and Spanish in Austin, Fort Worth, El Paso, and Houston. Each two-day course is presented by authorized instructors and is designed to train employers and their employees in the essentials of occupational health and safety in construction. Classes cover specific OSHA standards and requirements as they apply to the construction industry and teach safety awareness, which helps in recognizing and reducing the risks of job site hazards. Participants who successfully complete the two-day course will receive an OSHA 10-Hour Construction class completion card within six to eight weeks. ▲

Register!

For additional information on these classes, visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/events/index.html>.

Due to limited space, registration is required. To register or for more information on class availability, call (512) 804-4610.

Safety DVDs featuring Heat Stress Prevention, Landscape Safety and Outdoor Safety

The DWC Resource Center has over 4,000 DVDs in its library, including more than 150 DVDs in the subject areas of Heat Stress Prevention, Landscape Safety, and Outdoor Safety. Most titles are available in both English and Spanish. Titles and descriptions of these DVDs can be found under the *Heat Stress*, *Landscape Safety*, and *Outdoor Safety* subject headings.

Heat Stress DVD1112ES

"Teaches employees how to handle high heat stress environments." 16 min.

Groundskeeping Safety: Dealing with Bugs and Critters DVD1020ES

"Covers basic personal protective equipment, snakes, wasps, bees, fire ants, poison ivy, poison oak, and first aid." 16 min.

Poisonous Plant Safety DVD2877,DVD2877S

"Covers poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, plant toxicology, what to do if exposed, and preventing exposure." 16 min.

Venomous Snakes DVD2852,DVD2852S

"Describes venomous snakes of Texas and their habitat and habits. Covers strike posture, venom toxicology, what to do if bitten, and working around snakes." 23 min. ▲

Book Your DVDs!

Information on how any Texas employer or employee can check out safety DVDs for free and the DWC Resource Center catalog are available on the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>.

June is National Safety Month

Each June, the National Safety Council (NSC) encourages organizations to participate in National Safety Month. According to the NSC, this year's theme is "What I Live For," a program built around sharing personal stories.

This year's focus includes topics on prescription painkiller abuse, transportation safety, ergonomics, emergency preparedness, and slips, trips, and falls.

Download!

Free downloadable campaign materials and information about National Safety Month can be found on the NSC website at http://www.nsc.org/nsc_events/Nat_Safe_Month/Pages/home.aspx.

DWC Workplace Safety Job Postings

There are many benefits to working for the State of Texas and the DWC, as detailed on the agency website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/jobs/index.html>.

A complete listing of positions currently available can be viewed at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/jobs/jobs.html>.

DWC, OSHCON, and OSHA Recognize Three Texas Companies with Exemplary Safety Programs

The DWC's Occupational Safety and Health Consultation (OSHCON) Program and OSHA recently recognized the following Texas companies for their outstanding safety programs with the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) award.



SHARP

Clark's Precision Machine and Tool, which employs 42 people at its Azle location, provides machine tooling products and services. This company has been granted a one-year renewal of its exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

Coverlay Manufacturing, Inc., which employs 32 people at its San Angelo location, manufactures dash board covers, door panels, instrument panel covers, and kick panels. This company has been granted a one-year exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

Health Select, Inc. DBA Pecos Nursing Home, which employs 60 persons at its Pecos location, is an 89-bed Medicare/Medicaid accredited nursing home facility. This company has been granted a one-year renewal of its exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

The SHARP award recognizes small, private sector Texas employers for exemplary safety management programs and low incidence rates of work-related injuries and illnesses after participation in the DWC OSHCON program.

OSHCON is a free service designed to help employers understand and comply with OSHA standards through safety consultations conducted by DWC's professional consultants. Benefits for employers participating in the OSHCON program include prevention of work-related injuries and illnesses; confirmation to their employees and customers of their commitment to safety; public acknowledgment of their safety efforts; monetary savings to the

company by reducing workers' compensation costs and other costs associated with work-related injuries and illnesses; and protection of company assets such as employees, equipment, supplies, products, and facilities.

Employers receiving consultation services from the OSHCON program may be eligible for SHARP status if they have fewer than 250 employees at a worksite and fewer than 500 employees corporate-wide; have operations limited to a fixed worksite; undergo a full-service OSHCON consultation; involve employees in the consultation process; correct all hazards identified by the consultation; and have days away, restricted or transfer (DART), and total case rate (TCR) injury and illness incidence rates below the national average for their industries. ▲

Find Out More About SHARP and OSHCON!

For further information about the OSHCON program and SHARP, call (800) 687-7080, visit the OSHCON website at <http://www.txoshcon.com>, or e-mail OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov.

OSHA Update

New Respiratory Protection Toolkit

OSHA and NIOSH have released a new toolkit to help health care employers protect hospital staff from respiratory hazards on the job. The *Hospital Respiratory Protection Toolkit* includes information provided by The Joint Commission, an accrediting body for more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs in the United States.

Respirators are used to protect health care employees from exposure to airborne transmissible infectious diseases as well as chemicals and certain drugs. OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard requires health care employers to establish and maintain a respiratory protection program in workplaces where employees may be exposed to respiratory hazards.

The *Hospital Respiratory Protection Toolkit* can be downloaded from the OSHA website at <https://www.osha.gov/pls/publications/publication.AthruZ?pType=AthruZ#R> in both .pdf and .docx formats.

Ethanol Processing

A new chapter on *Ethanol Processing* has been added to the *OSHA Technical Manual*, available on the agency website at https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/otm_iv/otm_iv_5.html. This new chapter provides OSHA inspectors with technical information about workplace hazards in ethanol-for-fuel manufacturing facilities. It includes key process descriptions, potential hazards, and abatement measures needed to prevent or mitigate hazards found in this industry.

OSHA offers an updated "Job Safety and Health – It's the Law!" poster

This new poster has been updated to include the new reporting obligations for employers, who must now report every fatality and every hospitalization, amputation, and loss of an eye. The poster can be found on the agency website at <https://www.osha.gov/pls/publications/publication.AthruZ?pType=AthruZ#J> and more information on the new reporting obligations can be found at <https://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping2014/index.html>. ▲

Free OSHA Compliance Assistance

The DWC provides free compliance assistance service for small businesses with fewer than 250 employees at any one facility, and no more than 500 employees nationwide through its Occupational Safety and Health Consultation (OSHCON) Program. OSHCON is a non-regulatory program, and its professional safety and health consultants are available to help you identify and eliminate occupational hazards in your workplace, whether or not your company carries workers' compensation insurance. ▲

Find Out More About OSHCON!

For information about the OSHCON program and assistance with OSHA standards, contact the DWC at (800) 687-7080 or OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov, or visit the OSHCON website at <http://www.txoshcon.com>.

Report Unsafe Working Conditions

The DWC Safety Violations Hotline is a bilingual, 24-hour, toll-free telephone line that allows Texas employees to confidentially report unsafe working conditions to the DWC. By law, your employer is responsible for providing a safe work environment for you. While working, you may encounter safety and health hazards that could cause injury, illness or death.

The Safety Violations Hotline allows you, the employee, to take an active role in preventing workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. After the DWC receives a report of a work-related safety or health issue, its safety inspectors will work with the employer and insurance carrier to help eliminate hazards.

Employers are prohibited by law from retaliation, and may not suspend, terminate the employment of, or otherwise discriminate against an employee for using the telephone service to report in good faith an alleged violation of an occupational safety or health law. ▲

Report a Safety Violation

Report workplace safety or health hazards to the Safety Violations Hotline by calling (800)-452-9595 or use the online form at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/hotline.html>. Reports of violations may be made anonymously.

For questions about workers' compensation claims, call the DWC at (800) 252-7031. To report other non-safety related workplace issues, contact 2-1-1 Texas by dialing 211 on your telephone for information about how to get in touch with the appropriate agency.

Upcoming Safety Observances

June 1-30
National Safety Month

June 1-July 31
National Fireworks Safety Month

July 1-31
UV Safety Month

August 2-8
National Stop on Red Week

August 19-September 7
Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over

September 1-30
National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month

September 1-30
National Preparedness Month

September 20-26
National Farm Safety & Health Week

September 23-29
Fall Prevention Awareness Week

A Proactive Return to Work Process will help Employers Reduce and Control Workers' Compensation Costs

The longer an injured employee is away from work, the higher an employer's workers' compensation and related business costs will be, and the worse the impact of the injury is on the employee.

We often hear about the advantages of early return to work, but seldom hear how to successfully "do" it. Eliminating medically unnecessary lost time by having a procedure allowing and encouraging an injured employee to continue to do productive work while they recover benefits both the employer and the employee. Employers frequently believe that they do not have the time or resources to provide modified work opportunities.

The DWC provides seminars, consultations, and a printed guide to help employers develop a process that suits their particular businesses and workforce needs. The information available through the DWC explores work assignment options that may not have been considered in the past. Reducing absences and costly turnover are added bonuses of a return-to-work program.

Assistance from the DWC will help employers:

- Learn how to work more effectively with claims adjusters since employer involvement is critical in managing costs and reducing lost time;
- Understand their role and the roles of the treating doctor and claims adjuster;
- Learn how to avoid the pitfalls employers often face when attempting to bring injured employees back to work;
- Take the necessary steps to implement a return-to-work program; and
- Make "real" modified job assignments.

By returning injured employees to work while they are recuperating, they will be earning wages instead of collecting benefits that could needlessly drive workers' compensation insurance premiums higher and higher. ▲

Download!

Additional information, including the *Making Return to Work - Work - for Your Business and Your Employees* guide, can be found on the agency website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/rtw/index.html>.

Book Your Seminar or Consultation!

To arrange for a seminar or consultation, to receive printed copies of the employer guide, or for additional information, call (512) 804-4804 or e-mail pat.crawford@tdi.texas.gov.

CONTACT US!

FREE OSHA COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE

- Occupational Safety and Health Consultation (OSHCON) Program

<http://www.txoshcon.com>

(800) 687-7080

OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov

SAFETY & HEALTH RESOURCES

- Free Safety and Health Publications
<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/index.html>
- Free Audiovisual Loans
<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>
(512) 804-4620
- Safety Training Courses and Seminars
(512) 804-4610
safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov
- Helpful Safety and Health Resource Links
<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/govunivlinks.html>

DWC Resource Center

(512) 804-4620

ResourceCenter@tdi.texas.gov

OCCUPATIONAL INJURY AND ILLNESS DATA

- Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII)

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/sis/nonfatalhomepag.html>

(512) 804-5020

InjuryAnalysis@tdi.texas.gov

- Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI)

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/sis/fathomepage.html>

(512) 804-5020

CFOI@tdi.texas.gov

REPORT A SAFETY VIOLATION OR HAZARD

- Safety Violations Hotline

Reports are taken in both English and Spanish and may be made anonymously.

(800) 452-9595

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/hotline.html>

RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

(512) 804-5000

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/rtw/index.html>

To subscribe to receive e-mail alerts when the *Safety & Health Update* newsletter is published online, plus additional information on occupational safety and health matters, including safety tips and publications, upcoming training events, training DVD loans, and OSHA updates, visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/alert/dwcsafetyhealth.html>.

Please forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues interested in preventing workplace injuries and illnesses.

Have a safe day!