



Ergonomics in Construction

Construction is a very physically demanding occupation. Pulling, pushing, carrying heavy loads, digging, using heavy machinery, extreme weather conditions, repetitive jobs, materials handling, and other work hazards can all affect an employee's health and safety. Workers are always at risk for serious ergonomic injuries such as work-related musculoskeletal disorders, back sprains, and strain. For example, these are all common injuries for roofers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and construction workers. Ergonomics is the science of finding ways to make work easier, smarter, and more efficient by changing the way of handling physical work while still maintaining safe practices. Through task assessment and the use of engineering controls, administrative controls, and training manual job hazards can be minimized. OSHA uses the General Duty Clause to cite the workplace for ergonomics hazards.



Some Ergonomics Tips:

- Plan to minimize handling of heavy materials by using a forklift.
- Store the materials close to the place where they will be used.
- Make sure materials are easily accessible.
- Do not clutter the workplace with unused tools.
- Keep walkways clean and free from debris.
- In general, practice good housekeeping.
- Use carts and dollies to move materials.
- Use tools that make work more efficient (for example, pulley systems).
- Use Personal Protective Equipment when needed (shoulder pads, etc.)
- If you do not have weight limits, ask for help.
- Train workers for ergonomic risks and solutions according to their job requirements.
- Have a trained manager at the workplace to handle ergonomic risks and solutions.

Work Site Review: Hazards/Safety Suggestions

Company Name: _____ Work Site Location: _____

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Foreman/Supervisor: _____

Employee Signatures: (continue on back of sheet if necessary)

(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness)

Manager/Supervisor's Signature: _____

Disclaimer: The information and suggestions contained in these safety talks are believed to be reliable. However, the authors of the topics and the owners of this web site accept no legal responsibility for the correctness, sufficiency, or completeness of such information or suggestions contained within these topics. These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations



Lifting Safety: What Not to Do

OSHA does not have a specific standard for heavy lifting hazards to employees. The General Duty Clause states that each workplace must be free of recognized hazards that create the potential for serious injury to employees. OSHA encourages all employers to provide a safe workplace through training and education. This may help to reduce or prevent injuries from heavy or unsafe lifting.

What Not to Do:

- Do not try to lift an object that is extremely heavy by yourself.
- Do not carry an object that weighs more than 30 pounds.
- Do not push yourself past your limits.
- Do not rely on a back belt to protect you.
- Avoid twisting.
- Do not use your upper body.
- Do not carry anything unnecessary.
- Avoid carrying a load for a long distance.
- Do not lift heavy or bulky loads by yourself.
- Avoid lifting with one hand.
- Do not lift heavy objects for long hours.
- Do not lift when you are sitting or kneeling.
- Do not lift an unstable object.
- Do lift heavy objects in small spaces.
- Do not lift the load if you can use equipment to lift it.
- Avoid lifting if you are pushing something.
- Do not lift or carry any object if you are wearing slippery shoes.
- Do not use your upper body to lift a load.
- Avoid lifting above shoulder level.



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Narrow Frame Scaffolds

Narrow frame scaffolds are assembled platforms used in the construction industry. They are comfortable, easy to move, and safe to use with wider and deeper areas to work. They can be used for painting, drywall installation, plastering, and other tasks. Narrow frame scaffolds are safer than using ladders.

Narrow frame scaffolds do, however, present some safety hazards. These can be electrical shocks, tip-over, or collapse. To prevent these safety hazards only authorized people can use a narrow frame scaffold. The trained employees must be aware of possible hazards, the type of scaffold used for the job, and how to avoid hazards. Trained employees must know how to erect, inspect, maintain, operate, move, adjust, and repair scaffolds. OSHA requires training of employees. Any applicable OSHA, ANSI, Federal, state, and local codes for specific requirements must be checked.



Narrow Frame Scaffolding Safety Practices:

- Do not climb on a scaffold unless adjustable legs are locked.
- Remove any substances such as grease, oil, and other unsafe materials from platforms.
- Do not move a scaffold with tools, materials, or equipment on it.
- Floor must be free of debris, holes, and obstructions.
- Apply the necessary force to move a scaffold close to the floor with manpower.
- Do not use powered tools to move a scaffold.
- Workers on the scaffold must be warned prior to movement of it.
- Scaffold height cannot be more than 2 sections.
- Follow manufacturer instructions. Conduct inspection prior to use.
- Stay at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Lock scaffold wheels to prevent movement while in use.
- Keep platform free from tripping hazards, such as tools and equipment.
- Do not use any other items, such as boxes or barrels, to gain height on the scaffold.
- While standing on the platform do not try to pull yourself from one location to another location.
- Report any damage or defects to a supervisor immediately.
- Do not use incomplete scaffolds.
- All employees must be trained before using scaffolding.

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Understanding the Hazard Communication Standard

By: Paul Taulbee

The Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) is now aligned with the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS). This update to the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) will provide a common and coherent approach to classifying chemicals and communicating hazard information on labels and safety data sheets. This update will also help reduce trade barriers and result in productivity improvements for American businesses that regularly handle, store, and use hazardous chemicals while providing cost savings for American businesses that periodically update safety data sheets and labels for chemicals covered under the hazard communication standard.

Hazard Communication Standard

In order to ensure chemical safety in the workplace, information about the identities and hazards of the chemicals must be available and understandable to workers. OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) requires the development and dissemination of such information:

- Chemical manufacturers and importers are required to evaluate the hazards of the chemicals they produce or import and prepare labels and safety data sheets to convey the hazard information to their downstream customers.
- All employers with hazardous chemicals in their workplaces must have labels and safety data sheets for their exposed workers, and train them to handle the chemicals appropriately.

Major changes to the Hazard Communication Standard



- Hazard classification: Provides specific criteria for classification of health and physical hazards, as well as classification of mixtures.
- Labels: Chemical manufacturers and importers will be required to provide a label that includes a harmonized signal word, pictogram, and hazard statement for each hazard class and category. Precautionary statements must also be provided.
- Safety Data Sheets: Will now have a specified 16-section format.
- Information and training: Employers are required to train workers by December 1, 2013 on the new label's elements and safety data sheets format to facilitate recognition and understanding.

Has your company updated your program to align with this new standard? If so, what was it like? Do you like the new or old safety data sheets better?

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