



TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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Risk Management Issues

June 2014



June

National Safety Month



National Safety Month is an annual observance to educate and influence behaviors around the leading causes of preventable injuries and deaths.

As an agency, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) is committed to emphasizing a safe environment for all employees and offenders.

The National Safety Council (NSC) recognizes June of each year as National Safety Month.

This year the primary areas of focus for National Safety Month include ,

- Prevent prescription drug abuse
- Stop slips, trips and falls
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Put an end to distracted driving
- Bonus: Summer safety

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

“On the Journey to Safety Excellence, successful organizations engage everyone in safety and create a culture where people feel a personal responsibility not only for their own safety, but for that of their coworkers, family and friends,” said Janet Froetscher, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. “While safety is important year-round, June is a great time to get everyone involved as the nation observes National Safety Month.”

Prescription Painkillers: Prevent Drug Abuse

A Hidden Workplace Danger

Prescription painkiller abuse is a rising epidemic and can greatly impact the workplace. The TDCJ is committed to a drug and alcohol free workplace as detailed in the Human Resources Personnel Directives.

All unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the workplace and corrective action shall be taken against employees for violations of such prohibitions.



Employees may now be struggling with a problem they never intended to have. If a co-worker or employee is under the influence of prescription painkillers, common on-the-job behaviors may indicate a problem include:

- Lack of attention or focus
- Poor decision-making
- Decreasing work quality
- Poor judgment
- Unusual carelessness
- Frequently misses work

Many of these signs and symptoms may come on gradually and can be difficult to spot. None of them is a definitive indicator that the person has a problem, but if there is suspicion or if there are any questions regarding the Drug/Alcohol Program, please contact Human Resources Division Labor Relations Department.

NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH 2014

Chronic Back Pain

Because so many addictions stem from a serious medical problem, prevention is important.



Back injuries, for example, are some of the most common work-related injuries.

Though most back injuries are treated successfully with anti-inflammatory medications, exercises, physical therapy and other methods, sometimes opioid painkillers are prescribed. They should usually only be used for less than seven days, as longer use increases your risk of long-term complications.

Being proactive in your daily routine can help sideline these injuries before they become serious and may prevent the need for painkillers:

- Pay attention to your form: Maintaining good posture and practicing proper lifting techniques are key in ergonomic safety
- Watch your weight: Carrying extra pounds can cause an extra strain on your back
- Put your cigarettes out: Smokers are especially vulnerable to back pain due to nutrient restriction to the spinal discs

Safe Use, Storage & Disposal of Prescription Drugs

If you or a family member receives a prescription for these types of drugs, take these steps to prevent drug misuse:

- Always follow the doctor recommended dosage
- Keep medications in their original container, up & away from the reach of children and pets



Dispose of leftover or expired drugs safely; visit nsc.org/disposalresources for more information

Be Aware Of Your Surroundings

It Pays To Pay Attention

Today, there are always multiple things vying for your attention. However, a lack of focus on the task at hand can lead to tragedy, especially in riskier situations.

One of the leading causes of work-related deaths is due to contact with objects, which in-



clude being struck against an object; struck by an object; caught in an object or equipment; or caught in collapsing material. According to Injury Facts®, there were 738 workplace deaths due to these types of incidents, and more than 240,000 cases of injuries with days away from work in 2010.

These types of injuries can arise from falling objects or from being inadvertently struck by a moving vehicle—such as a forklift or a car. Paying attention is vitally important for not only those operating machinery, but also those working around it.

Slips, Trips and Falls: A Step In The Right Direction

Mind Your P's and Q's

Walking surfaces can be unpredictable. Whether it's a change in elevation or brutal weather, always be proactive in preventing slips, trips and falls:



- Wear appropriate shoes for the task at hand
- When getting out of a vehicle, create points of contact by holding onto the door, roof or assist handle
- In inclement weather, wipe shoes well on rugs when entering buildings to prevent tracking in water, snow and salt
- Avoid distracted walking and remain alert for any surface changes (i.e. tile to carpet or

heightened sidewalk blocks)

- Six out of 10 falls happen at home – adding handrails, maintaining good housekeeping and cleaning spills will help minimize risk

Follow basic safety rules when using ladders: check its condition before use and maintain 3 points contact on the ladder at all times

A Strong Core: Restoring your Balance

Even though some risks are beyond our control, there are many simple steps you can take to prevent injury. Located in the center of your body, the core muscles are a linchpin in everything the top and bottom of your body does. When these muscles are weak, it can lead to instability, pain and, ultimately, a higher chance of slips, trips and falls. Doing exercises can help strengthen your core, lower your chance of debilitating falls and restores balance back into your body.

Put an End to Distracted Driving

Cell phone use while driving has become an unfortunate part of our culture, but is a very dangerous activity that shouldn't be considered a necessity – business or otherwise. There are steps you can take to make it easier to put down the phone when you are behind the wheel, and break the habit for good.

- Schedule calls for times when you will not be driving
- Tell other people not to call you when they know you are driving
- Plan your day ahead of time

so you won't need to use a cell phone while driving

- Change your voicemail greeting to something like: "Hi, you've reached (insert name). I'm either away from my phone or I'm driving. Please leave a message."

You also can let callers know approximately what time you will be available again so they know when to expect to hear from you.

- If a ringing phone is too tempting, get in the habit of silencing your phone before you start to drive, or lock it in the trunk or glove box

• Work with your coworkers and family members on breaking the habit and hold each other accountable

- Allow enough time during your commute for stops so you can pull over and park in a safe location to check email and voice-mail messages

• Consider using call-blocking technology when you are driving Remember, hands-free devices don't make you safer – while they allow for one more hand to be placed on the steering wheel, they do not reduce cognitive distraction to the brain



One in four crashes involves driver distraction. Drivers who use cell phones in their vehicles have a higher risk of collision than drivers who don't, whether holding the phone or using a hands-free device.

Current Cell Phone Prohibitions in Texas

- Drivers with learner's permits are prohibited from using handheld cell phones in the first six months of driving.
- Drivers under the age of 18 are prohibited from using wireless communications devices.
- School bus operators are prohibited from using cell phones while driving if children are present.
- In school crossing zones, all drivers are prohibited from using handheld devices.

Although Texas has no statewide law banning the use of cell phones while driving, many local areas prohibit or limit the use of cell phones while driving.

According to a February 2012 report compiled by the Texas State House of Representatives, the following cities have enacted ordinances prohibiting texting while driving:

Alamo	Missouri City
Arlington	Mount Vernon
Austin	Nacogdoches
Bellaire	Palmview
Brownsville	Penitas
Conroe	San Antonio
El Paso	Shoreacres
Galveston	Stephenville
Harlingen	Tomball
Magnolia	Universal City
McAllen	West University Place
Mission	

Employees operating a state-owned or leased vehicle shall at all times operate the vehicle in a safe manner consistent with traffic laws.

No phone call is worth a life. Want to do more? Encourage your family and friends to put down their cell phones while driving, and speak up if you are riding with a driver who is using a cell phone. You also can refrain from talking on the phone with others if you know they are driving.

Summer Safety

Fun in the Sun

Everyone enjoys a little bit of summer fun, but it's always important to monitor the weather conditions in extreme heat—especially if you plan on being outside. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- No matter how long you plan on being out, wear sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15
 - Take water breaks every 15 minutes when working or playing outdoors – try to set up a shady or air conditioned recovery area
 - Wear a hat and UV-absorbent sunglasses
- Eat small, light meals before outdoor activity

Listen to Your Body

Even after following all the necessary precautions, you should still be on the lookout for overexertion.

Overexertion accounts for about 3.3 million emergency room visits a year in the United States, and symptoms can be heightened in the heat. Stop and take a break if you experience the following:

- Dizziness
 - Sore or painful muscles
 - Pulse higher than recommended exercise pulse for your size and physical condition
 - Feeling very hot and sweating profusely
 - Low abdominal pain
- Nausea

Yard Safety

Yard upkeep is essential during the warmer months, but is also a common cause of injury. Lawnmowers alone send tens of thousands of people to the emergency room each year. Don't start mowing until you:

- Know how to operate the equipment and follow safety instructions
 - Fill up the gas tank when the engine is cold
 - Clear the area from rocks and sticks to prevent flying debris
 - Wear eye and ear protection, and appropriate shoes and clothing when operating the lawnmower or working nearby
- Keep children and pets away from the area



References

- National Safety Council- National Safety Month. http://www.nsc.org/nsc_events/Nat_Safe_Month/Pages/home.aspx
- Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) Driver Safety and Laws <http://www.txdot.gov/driver/laws/>

[cellphones.html](#)

- TDCJ PD-17 Drug Free Workplace
- TDCJ AD-02.50 TDCJ Vehicle Policy



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