



TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

Volume 15 Issue 6

Risk Management Issues

June 2015



June NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

“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.” 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.



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 include 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 fork-

lift or a car. Paying attention is vitally important for not only those operating machinery, but also those working around it.

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.



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 tech-

- niques 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



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.

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 voicemail 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.



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.

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	Farmers Branch	Palmview
Alice	Galveston	Pampa
Amarillo	Grand Praire	Penitas
Aransas Pass	Harlingen	Richwood
Arlington	Helotes	Rowlett
Austin	Larado	San Antonio
Bellaire	Magnolia	Shoreacres
Brownsville	Maypearl	Sinton
Canyon	McAllen	Stephenville
Conroe	Meadowlakes	Tomball
Converse	Mission	Universal City
Corpus Christi	Missouri City	West University Place
Denton	Mount Vernon	
El Paso	Nacogdoches	

Fines range from \$200 to \$500.

Nearly 40 cities have adopted ordinances since November 2009.

Avoid Flooded Areas Driven to Disaster

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States, however not all floods are alike. Some floods develop slowly, while others such as flash floods, can develop in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain. Additionally, floods can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states. Flash floods can occur within a few minutes or hours of excessive rainfall, a dam or levee failure, or a sudden release of water held by an ice jam. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water carrying rocks, mud and other debris. Overland flooding, the most common type of flooding event, typically occurs when waterways such as rivers or streams overflow their banks as a result of rainwater or a possible levee breach, and cause flooding in surrounding areas. It can also occur when rainfall or snowmelt exceeds the capacity of underground pipes, or the capacity of streets and drains designed to carry flood water away from urban areas. Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live or work, but especially if you are in low-lying areas, near water, behind a levee or downstream from a dam. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts,

dry streambeds or low-lying ground that appear harmless in dry weather can flood.

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 or 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 near-

- by
 - Keep children and pets away from the area.

Falling Trees

Last year, severe storms caused more than \$12 million in U.S. property damage. Although there are no specific statistics on how much of that was caused by falling trees, they are a frequent source of damage to homes, power lines and more. Old and diseased trees are especially vulnerable to high winds and flooding, but even the healthiest trees can come crashing down. When a tree comes down in a storm and hits a house, garage, deck or fence, the damage is probably covered under a homeowners' policy, less the deductible. Under the additional coverage section of many policies, the cost of removing the tree would be covered at a rate of \$500 per tree, or \$1,000 per incident.



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
- <http://www.ready.gov/floods>



Training Circular
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Volume 15 Issue 6
June 2015

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The *Training Circular*, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in an effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Design and layout of the *Training Circular* is performed by Gabrielle Villarreal, Risk Management. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome. Send Suggestions to:

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- www.foxnews.com/leisure/2011/04/12/tree-falls-house

