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Complete Health, Environmental & Safety Services, Inc.

Complete Health Environmental & Safety Services, Inc. Newsletter

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Welcome back? COVID-19 and the long game

Restrictions are being lifted, but the pandemic hasn't stopped. As you keep your essential employees working, bring employees back to the office, or consider continuing remote work, don't let up on keeping them safe and healthy.

This newsletter will cover some of the most recent developments, recommendations and resources, and answer some more frequently asked questions. For past newsletters and information, please see our Coronavirus page <http://chess-safety.com/safety-resources-161/resources?id=102>

Break the Chain of Transmission

Knowing how the disease is spread means you know what steps are needed to prevent its spread.

- 1) Don't breathe others' breath. Even apparently healthy people can transmit COVID-19. Just talking produces microscopic droplets.
- 2) Watch what you touch. If those microscopic droplets land on a surface that you then touch, you can transfer the virus to your nose and mouth.

The measures to take at your facility

- Keep people separated. That means at work and during breaks.
- Require people to report if they feel ill - and to stay home.
- Consider checking temperatures (or encourage employees to check their own). A temperature of 100.4° F or higher is a cause for concern.
 - How to check? Use a no-touch thermometer. Target is offering those at cost (\$51.49) to businesses. See <https://corporate.target.com/about/purpose-history/our-commitments/target-coronavirus-hub/b2b-thermometers>
- Clean often. Focus, in particular, on the surfaces people touch a lot. Provide hand sanitizer and handwashing supplies.
- Keep encouraging people to work from home if feasible.

Minnesota OSHA has specific guidelines at http://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/employer_preparedness_plan_requirements_checklist.pdf

The American Industrial Hygiene Association has guidelines for different industries at www.backtoworksafely.org. Let us know if you need help developing guidelines for your workplace.

If you want assistance with developing your COVID19 Prevention Plan, please contact us.

Questions

Should everyone come back to the office?

Continue to have employees work from home, if feasible. The Governor's Stay Safe MN order allows more facilities to reopen, but keeps in place working from home, if possible, and staying close to home.

Do you have to require face masks?

Face masks are not required by law, but they help stop you from spreading droplets to others. We encourage their use when people are around other people. Remember that face masks are not respirators - respirators are intended to protect the wearer from breathing in harmful contaminants. Face masks protect other people by limiting the spread of respiratory droplets. Many establishments will request customers wear them, if they are able to.

Do you have to provide face masks?

No, but if you want people to use them, we recommend providing them. Employers have to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) at no cost, but because face masks are not protecting the wearer, they aren't considered PPE.

Can someone refuse to work if a mask isn't provided?

Maybe, but not usually. Employees have the right to refuse to work under conditions they think present an imminent danger of death or serious physical harm. Health care workers providing care to COVID-19 patients can exercise this right. No one else should be working near anyone with symptoms (because the symptomatic person should be at home). Don't ignore a complaint from someone refusing to work because of lack of masks, though - work with that person to find out what would make them comfortable at work.

Employers may not retaliate against employees who raise safety concerns. For that matter, employers may not retaliate against employees who bring in their own protective gear.

What if you can't get N95 filtering facepieces ("dust masks")?

N95 filtering facepieces have become nearly impossible to obtain. Your choices, for people who routinely use those for protection against dusts in the workplace:

If use is required

Can you switch to half-mask respirators with particulate filters or prefilters? For body shops, the prefilters on paint spray respirators make them equivalent to N95 filtering facepieces. Contact us for fit testing if you need to make this switch.

If use is voluntary

Option 1: Half-mask respirators with particulate filters or prefilters. These do require medical approval.

Option 2: Non-NIOSH approved filtering facepieces, such as the Chinese KN95 masks. These can be nearly as effective as NIOSH-approved N95s, but they may not fit as well. The KN95 is designed to fit Chinese faces, so it may be a lot harder to get a suitable fit for people with European, African, or American ancestry.

If you're thinking about going through a new vendor for filtering facepieces, be cautious - there are a lot of counterfeit N95 respirators on the market. Contact us if you need to know if you're being offered legitimate ones. One way to tell: if it has ear loops instead of straps that go around your head, it is not a NIOSH-approved respirator.

Option 3, the best option: Look at ways to control dust. Don't use compressed air to blow it around. Use dust capture systems. Cloth face masks may improve comfort, but they aren't effective at stopping small particles.

Annual Right to Know Training and Respirator Fit Testing

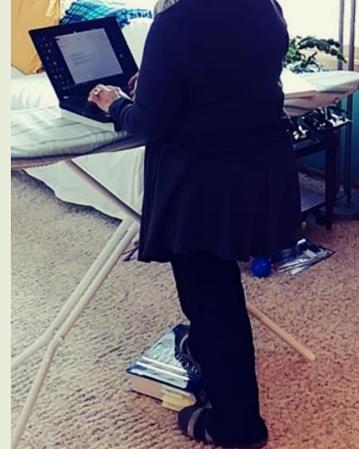
In accord with the Governor's orders, we haven't been doing the required annual Right to Know training and respirator fit testing. During the pandemic, OSHA is "exercising enforcement discretion" for fit testing. If we can do in-person Right to Know training for a small group in a large area, so we can stay far enough apart, we'll do that training. We're looking at ways to provide virtual Right to Know training - but it'll be without candy. We're holding off on any annual respirator fit testing that can be delayed.

Ergonomics at home

All that effort spent on setting up good workstations in the office is for naught when people work at home. But it doesn't have to be that way. Carol's been providing webinars on creating



ergonomic workspaces at home. If you're interested in that or want guidance on good ergonomic practices for home use, contact us. An example: ironing boards make good, height-adjustable workstations.



Electrical safety at home

As employees work at home, make sure they don't get careless with cords. ESFI published this infographic to remind people about safe use of electricity at home.

<http://files.esfi.org/file/Electrical-Safety-While-Working-From-Home-Infographic-42DF.pdf>

LTAP Resources for Public Works and Others

The Minnesota Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) has a page of safety resources, including one page safety tip sheets. <http://www.mnltap.umn.edu/topics/workplace/index.html>

Trichloroethylene

Remember Water Gremlin? They had some serious problems with lead exposure - and with emissions of trichloroethylene, a chlorinated solvent used most often for metal degreasing. On May 13, the Minnesota Legislature passed a ban on the use of trichloroethylene in any manufacturing or cleaning process or use. Governor Walz is expected to sign it into law this week (the week of May 15), with the ban going into effect June 1, 2022. Trichloroethylene is classified as a carcinogen and may cause birth defects. Minnesota is the first state to ban the chemical.

Letter from the MPCA

A few hazardous waste generators recently received a letter from the MPCA about paying an invoice for their 2018 hazardous waste. If you are in the Twin Cities metro area, you would have paid a fee to your county for your hazardous waste permit. The MPCA also imposes a fee, which is billed separately, and may be sent some time later. We are working with the MPCA on clarification about this. If you get this letter and have questions about it, please let us know (maybe we will have an answer).

Strange "cures"

We were researching a water disinfectant, chlorine dioxide, when we came across a peculiar use of it. Chlorine dioxide is used like chlorine to make water safe to drink, but because it is unstable, it has to be created onsite by mixing sodium chlorite and an acid. People actually have been suckered into drinking the ingredients, thinking it'll cure everything from autism to COVID-19. The ingredients are sold under names such as "Miracle Mineral Supplement." Disinfectants such as chlorine and chlorine dioxide, added to water in carefully controlled amounts, have saved billions of lives. But you wouldn't drink straight bleach, and you shouldn't drink sodium chlorite. The dose makes the poison - and the dose you get from drinking these can certainly poison you.

Contact us for assistance with safety, health and environmental issues. Please reach out if you have additional questions on any information in this newsletter, the novel coronavirus, or other health and safety issues.