

## CHESS Launches New Website

It's finally here! We've launched our completely redone [website](#).

Check it out. You'll find articles about all sorts of safety and health issues, pointers on OSHA grants and on hiring a safety consultant, information on the services we provide, upcoming events, and other useful material. A special thank-you to the shops and employees who served as models for pictures on the site (and to our photographer, Joe Ferrer).



## AWAIR and I2P2

Minnesota's AWAIR (A Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction) standard requires many companies to develop and implement a basic safety program. It doesn't have to be long or complicated, but it does have to include the company's basic policy statement about safety. The AWAIR program must specify who has safety responsibilities, including overall responsibility for the safety program. How safety issues are communicated (training, shop meetings, posters, etc), how hazards are identified (such as monthly building inspections, employee reporting), how those hazards will be eliminated, how safety is enforced (discipline policy for violating safety policies) and how accidents are investigated also need to be part of the AWAIR program.

Which Minnesota companies have to have an AWAIR program is based on the average injury rate for the industry. That's reevaluated every two years, when industries may be added or dropped based on their injury rates. This year, MN OSHA proposes to remove utilities such as natural gas distribution from the list, and to add a number of industries including these:

- \* Medical manufacturing
- \* Surgical and medical instruments manufacturing
- \* Eating establishments

- \* New and used car dealers
- \* Sign manufacturing
- \* Burial casket manufacturing
- \* Dance and theatrical companies
- \* Racetracks, museums, historical sites, amusement parks, golf courses, marinas, zoos

One peculiarity of the every-two-year revision is that industries could go off the list, then come back on. Burial casket makers and car dealers had to comply from 2007 to 2009. Their industry-wide injury rate dropped, so they came off the list. The rates went up, so they're back on. (For the whole list, see the [State Register, Volume 35, #14](#))

While having a basic overall safety program seems like an obvious thing to do, Minnesota is a forerunner in requiring one. Federal OSHA has been talking about a similar standard for many years, with no action until now. The Feds included a standard for an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (I2P2) on OSHA's spring 2010 regulatory agenda, and have begun holding stakeholder meetings. Minnesota OSHA staff has given presentations on the AWAIR program, as an example of an I2P2 program that works. If and when a federal standard does take effect, it will probably have little impact on the Minnesota employers who are already in compliance with AWAIR.

## Minnesota OSHA Has an OSHA Inspection

This past January, Minnesota OSHA underwent an in-depth audit by Federal OSHA. The report was just [recently published](#). James Krueger, the director of Minnesota OSHA, recently spoke to the Northwest Chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers about the audit.



All 26 state-run OSHA programs underwent audits, partially in response to extreme deficiencies in Nevada's state-run program, deficiencies that were putting employees at greater risk for fatalities.

In all, Minnesota fared well, with eleven findings and recommendations. We will see some changes in Minnesota's program based on the federal findings. We expect OSHA inspections to ramp up a little. Minimum penalties have gone up. If you do have an OSHA inspection, you will have to submit proof of abatement: receipts, training rosters and outline, pictures of the new equipment in use, etc.

Federal OSHA noted that Minnesota is doing some exceptional things. Fatality rates have gone down (but Mr. Krueger thinks the numbers are still too large). MN OSHA does a very good job at keeping family members of those who died at work informed and involved. Mr. Krueger and/or a supervisor at OSHA always offer to meet with the family members. Mr. Krueger stated that doing so helps everyone at OSHA remember why they do what they do, it makes the accident personal and it provides the family an opportunity to give any insight they may have on the incident.

We've come a long way from the 1970s, but sixty-five people still died because of their job in 2008.

## What'd You Say?

What's your favorite color?

Most people can answer this without much thought.

What's your favorite sound?

That one's usually harder to answer, but nearly everyone has favorite sounds. Birds, perhaps, or a Bach sonata. A sports announcer calling a winning run. Children laughing. What if you couldn't hear any of those? Or if they just sounded like indistinct mumbles? What if you couldn't hear sirens or cars honking warnings? Too much exposure to noise can cause just that.

It's rare that noise causes complete hearing loss. More often, people lose their hearing gradually. The cause: noise both at work and at home. Lawn



mowing, weed whacking, machinery, air compressors, air tools, loud music can all damage the ears.

Noise induced hearing loss doesn't have to happen. You can protect your ears. If you can't reduce the noise levels, wear hearing protection — either ear plugs or ear muffs. Earbuds with MP3 players are **not** hearing protection. They can make things worse, increasing your noise exposure.

The key to effective hearing protection is not which type, but wearing it correctly. Ear muffs must form a good seal around your ear. Earrings, beards, hair and safety glasses can interfere with this fit. For most muffs, the headband for the muffs should fit securely on the top of the head. Ear plugs should fit deeply in the ear canal. Many plugs are designed to be rolled down to a very small size and inserted into the ear canal, where they expand to fill the space. When removing ear plugs, twist them slightly to loosen the fit and then remove them.

Do you dislike wearing hearing protection because it hurts? Different ear plugs and ear muffs fit differently. If one brand isn't comfortable, try another type. They're all about the same cost.

Worried you'll miss important noises if you're wearing hearing protection? Not likely. While the strength of the sound waves is reduced, hearing protection still allows sound to reach your ear drum. Compare four foot waves to a gentle rolling wave—both still hit the beach. You can hear both types of waves, but one will be roaring, while the other is a gentle sound.

Did you know that people tend to talk quieter and faster when wearing hearing protection? Think about it—you hear your own voice in your head so it sounds louder than when your ears are open. (Try it: say something. Now plug your ears and say the same thing. It is harder to tell how loud you are talking.) So if you're having a hard time hearing someone when it's noisy, ask the speaker to talk louder.

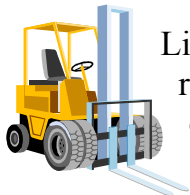
People sometimes think that if they lose their hearing they can just get hearing aids, like getting glasses for deficient eyesight. But hearing aids are a most imperfect solution. They amplify sounds, but they don't restore the nerve cells that are damaged by noise. If you wear hearing aids, sounds will be different, muffled. The aids are expensive, easily over \$3000 for good ones (and that doesn't include maintenance and battery replacement). Protecting your hearing is easier, less expensive, and much more effective than trying to fix the loss later.

Earbuds and MP3 players (iPods, etc.). We do not recommend them in the workplace. They usually don't block noise very well and too often, wearers simply crank up the volume on the earbuds to cover up background noise. Retail earbuds can be as loud as 94 dBA, loud enough to quickly cause hearing damage. Some manufacturers have developed earbuds that reduce and limit sound levels to 82 dBA, but those are only available through safety suppliers. Those cost about \$40. We are researching more information, including ordering information, on these so watch our blog for updates.

## OSHA Grants

CHESS recently helped two companies receive grants for a total of \$10,300 towards projects totally about \$60,000. Workplace Consultation is still awarding grants—contact us if you are interested in a safety grant and have a project in mind.

## Free Monthly Forklift Posters

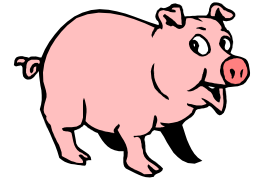


LiftTruck.com offers a free forklift related poster each month. Just log onto their website to sign up.

## What Do PIGS Have To Do With Fire Extinguishers?

October is fire prevention month, so our safety tips (posted on [our blog](#)) are about fire safety and fire prevention. We prefer fire prevention to fire extinguisher use. But if there's a small fire, an extinguisher can squelch it before it becomes a big fire. That only works if the extinguisher is at hand. So we remind you to check your fire extinguishers. Make sure the extinguisher is accessible (not hidden behind equipment or coats), the pin is in place, the extinguisher has a current inspection tag, the gauge is in the green zone and the seal is present and undamaged. Mark came up with a mnemonic to remember this. A-PIGS:

- \* Accessible Always
- \* Pin in Place
- \* Inspection tag Intact
- \* Green Gauge\*
- \* Seal Set



\*Note: carbon dioxide extinguishers, used for flammable liquid and electrical fires, don't have gauges.

## Bench/Pedestal Grinder Safety Scales

It's much too rare that we see correctly adjusted guards on bench or pedestal grinders. The grinder has to have a work rest, kept within 1/8" of the wheel. It also must have a tongue guard at the top of the wheel, to contain shrapnel if the wheel explodes. That has to be kept within 1/4". Danray Products has come out with a safety scale to remind users of the correct adjustment. It can easily be attached to the grinder so it is there as a reminder and handy tool. It's available from Lovegreen, machine guarding specialists, for about \$8.



**Questions?** Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have safety-related questions or just need more information about something or the services we offer. Please contact us by phone (651-481-9787) or email ([deb\[at\]chess-safety.com](mailto:deb[at]chess-safety.com)) if you no longer want to receive newsletters or if you want them in a different format (email, mail).

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