



The CHESS Tournament

Safety News and Views you can use.

Complete Health, Environmental & Safety Services, Inc.

Complete Health Environmental & Safety Services, Inc. Newsletter

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Coronavirus Updates:

We've learned a lot since January.

You're at highest risk when you're near an infected person indoors, in rooms without a lot of outside air, and when people are talking or laughing loudly. You're safest when you're outside, with a mask covering nose and mouth, and when you stay apart from others. People who are infectious may not have any symptoms.

A few words about face coverings: Cover your nose. You breathe out through that. And it's when you breathe out that you give off the virus.

Avoid any face covering with an exhalation valve, as it reduces protection against coronavirus. Janet Keyes, CIH, notes that face coverings with exhalation valves don't completely counteract the purpose of the cloth covering, because not all expired air will go out via the valve. But it does seem to reduce the effectiveness of the face covering.

Face coverings have been shown to be one of the most effective methods of reducing the spread, especially when combined with physical distancing.

Respirators: We are still hearing that respirators, including some half mask respirators and N95 masks, are in short supply. If you are having difficulty getting respirators from your normal supplier, consider looking for them through a safety supply house. Contact us for more information.

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Updates

Minnesota has seen a rise in positive cases for COVID, but we are nowhere near what is called herd immunity (when so many in the population have had the virus, it no longer spreads easily). Getting to herd immunity will take years; to do it quickly will overwhelm our health care system.

As we prepare for colder weather and flu season, there are several steps you can take to help protect your workforce:

- Continue your COVID precautions (health screening, wearing masks indoors, physical distancing, disinfecting, having employees work from home when possible, using physical barriers such as sneeze screens)
- Before doors close with colder weather, take a look at your ventilation. See the information below.
- Encourage employees to get a flu shot. October is a great time to do this. You could also contact your occupational health clinic about offering flu shots at work.

Ventilation: Now is the time to meet with your HVAC company...

and look at improving or maintaining your HVAC system. The CDC and ASHRAE make these recommendations:

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase outdoor air ventilation (do this with caution if you're in an area with bad air pollution).
 - Adjust your HVAC system to maximize the amount of outdoor air and minimize recirculation. Many HVAC systems have been set to minimize outdoor air in the interest of energy savings. But now isn't the time to do that. In winter, you may need to reduce outside air so you can keep the building warm enough.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV).
- If air recirculates, ensure that return air is filtered to MERV-13 or the highest compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
- Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
- Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.
- Consider using portable air cleaners with HEPA filters.

Air cleaners that use ionization (such as bipolar ionization or needlepoint ionization) have been widely promoted. ASHRAE cautions that these may emit ozone, a very irritating gas. If you're considering using these, CDC advises that they should meet UL 2998, a standard limiting ozone emissions. And check the manufacturers' performance data. ASHRAE states that there's a lack of convincing scientifically-rigorous, peer-reviewed studies on how well they work.

Sheltering during a pandemic

While our severe weather/tornado season is over, and blizzards generally do not require people to flee or shelter, the time to talk about emergency preparedness is when there is no emergency.

If your employees need to seek shelter during the pandemic, are you prepared? Are your shelter areas large enough that employees will be able to maintain physical distancing? We recommend the following:

- Assess whether you need to designate additional shelter areas to allow employees to space out.
- Place disposable masks, hand sanitizer and trash bags within the shelter areas.
- Verify you have current weather apps on your mobile device so you know when to seek shelter and when employees can go back to work.
- Encourage employees to plan if a disaster strikes their homes-where can they seek shelter and what supplies will they want to have ready to go?

MN Department of Labor & Industry Updates

Work Comp CAMPUS

Minnesota is moving towards an all **on-line system for workers' compensation** -from filing forms (including First Report of Injury, benefit notices, and rehabilitation reports) to all information about cases that go to a hearing. MNDLI is holding Work Comp Campus trainings on a regular basis until the system goes live

on November 2. For more information and to set up an account, see the Work Comp Campus website: <http://www.dli.mn.gov/business/workers-compensation/work-comp-campus>

For CHES maintenance clients, if you want us to track your work comp claims and help monitor those, please contact Carol about setting up an Employer and partner account.

MNDLI released a 13 minute **video that reviews worker protections** during the pandemic. It covers frequently asked questions, along with employee rights. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkGkXXwvtm0&feature=youtu.be>

AIHA's Construction Committee, chaired by JLK, just released a new free resource, **Focus on Construction Health: COVID-19**, available at bit.ly/constructionhealthCOVID or https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/Guidance-Documents/Focus-on-Construction-Health-COVID-19_AIHAGuidanceDocument.pdf

OSHA Safety Grants

CHES has now helped companies secure 204 safety grants, with more than \$1.5 million awarded.

Safe Driving

Federated Insurance recently sent notices to their insureds about the large increase in fatal and serious accidents on the road. What the Chairman and CEO wrote is worth sharing, because it has the potential to affect all of us:

As businesses like yours resume "normal operations," company drivers are sharing the road with far fewer vehicles than in the past -and the temptation to speed or drive distracted is proving deadly. In the past 90 days, Federated clients have been involved in more than 50 crashes that killed or seriously injured someone. Every single one of these crashes had one thing in common: they were preventable.

People are dying. People are being permanently disabled. Families and businesses are being devastated all because drivers are failing to pay attention to simple safe driving practices. For example, in a recent two-week period of time:

- A young mother was killed when a company driver rear-ended her minivan while talking on the phone. Her two young children were also in the car and sustained permanent injuries.
- Three friends were killed when a company driver fell asleep behind the wheel and crossed the center line.
- Two pedestrians died after being struck by a distracted company driver failing to yield at an intersection.

I hope we agree: this has to stop.

Imagine if your business and employees had been involved in one of these crashes. Things would never be the same. In a time when so much is out of our control; we can control - and we must control - this disturbing trend. Together, you and Federated can prevent these crashes.

Training and Respirator Fit testing - how does that happen now?

We're still doing training and respirator fit testing, but with some significant changes. We can do training via Webex (or whatever videoconference platform you prefer). Or we'll do it in person, but not in small conference rooms. Instead, let's set up a space in the shop, where people can keep the appropriate distance. And instead of talking loudly, Janet is using a personal amplifier. For fit testing, we're usually using a Portacount, doing quantitative fit testing. There's no risk of cross-contamination from that. If possible, people will use their own respirators. If that isn't possible, we'll use ours, disinfected between users and with the additional precaution of having several days between users. And Janet wears an N95 filtering facepiece when she does the fit testing.

Reporting Season

It is almost hazardous waste reporting season in the Twin Cities Metro area. Hennepin County hazardous

waste reports will be due December 15. The other metro counties' reports are due January 31. If you are a CHES maintenance client, we will be reaching out to set up a time to complete your reports. If you are not a CHES maintenance client, we can still provide assistance. Just contact us at 651-481-9787.

CHES is here to help you

Whether it is comprehensive services, a focused compliance audit, training, program development or industrial hygiene monitoring, we can help. Call Carol at 651-842-9210 or email carkey@chess-safety.com to discuss your needs.