

New York State Public Entities Safety Group 497

Safety Agenda

___ Chief, Fire Department
___ Site Administrators
___ Commissioners
___ Human Resources
___ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
___ Elected Officials

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News From NYSIF

The New York State Insurance Fund is making two of its publications available in Spanish. They are: Partners in Safety and A Claims Guide for the Employer. Partners in Safety, or Socios en la Seguridad, includes tips on safety training, accident prevention, materials handling, personal protective equipment and a comprehensive Safety Checklist. A Claims Guide for the Employer, or Guide Solicitudes de Indemnizaci ara el Empleador, contains information on accident reporting, tips for recognizing fraud, forms descriptions, employment of minors and information on disability benefits.

The guides are available through the New York State Library State Documents Section, from your Group Manager or from NYSIF.

NYSIF has also established the first New York workers' compensation on-line verification of certificates of insurance on its website www.nysif.com. The service is intended to reduce fraud involving false certificates of insurance. Schools, contractors and others can use the website to verify that certificates of insurance have been issued and are still in force.

NYSIF policyholders can also create certificates of insurance (or request them from your Group Manager), report a work related injury, view monthly bills and account summaries and benefit from a return-to-work program.

NYSIF, a non-profit agency, issues workers' compensation policies to approximately 195,000 employers.

Can Firefighters Rely on PASS Devices?

Apparently not, according to an investigative report by MSNBC. Federal investigative reports reviewed by MSNBC show that 15 firefighters have died since 1998 in fires where a PASS, or Personal Alert System, either didn't sound or was so quiet that rescuers could not find the down firefighter quickly.

The PASS device is a motion sensor that makes a loud sound if a firefighter stops moving for 30 seconds while fighting a fire. It flashes lights and emits a series of ear-splitting beeps. Tests have shown that the devices can be adversely affected by moderately high temperatures and/or water, factors present in virtually all firefighting situations.

The National Fire Protection Association is in the process of issuing a tougher new standard for testing PASS devices in heat and water. However, manufacturers predict that it will be months before an improved device is on the market.

Manufacturers claim that hundreds of firefighters have been saved by PASS devices, so there is no reason to discontinue their use until new versions are available (and affordable by local fire departments). Firefighters of all ranks should, however, be aware of the potential limitations of current PASS devices; intensify training; make sure that firefighters work in pairs; and carefully assess the risk of each fire situation.

The full report on this, including the failure of CDC to investigate the firefighter deaths, is available at MSNBC.com.

Visit our Website at www.nysgroup497.com

Group Manager: Professional Underwriters – 1-800-833-8822, ext. 119

Safety Training for CBRNE

NIOSH has published a report on a conference conducted by the Johns Hopkins Education and Research Center for Occupational Health and Safety at which 200 expert participants were asked to identify health and safety training needs related to weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and explosives (CBRNE).

Among the findings of the conference:

- Some workers, especially emergency responders, may receive considerable training while many others receive little or no applicable training.
- Training for new CBRNE threats should be integrated into basic safety and health training programs.
- All training should reflect a high degree of coordination between emergency response and the public health sector.
- “Real-life” rehearsals must be an essential part of all training plans.

Recommended Pre-Event Training for all workers:

- Basic health and safety training on exposures, legal, regulatory and hazard communication.
- Basic knowledge and recognition of hazards and threats.
- Ability to access emergency notification systems and notify appropriate parties.
- Knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS).
- Knowledge of the worker’s specific functional role in an emergency, the limitations of that role, and the roles of others.
- Emergency evacuation and egress.
- Ability to use personal protective equipment (PPE).

Recommended Post-Event Training:

- Site-specific and event-specific hazards and threats.
- Site-specific and event-specific safety and health plan requirements.

- Ability to use PPE.
- Site-specific command and communication.
- Training as outlined in the Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) standard (29CFR 1910.120 and 1926.65).
- Critical Incident debriefing and stress management.

Pandemic Guidance

OSHA is recommending that employers plan now for an influenza epidemic, and has released a paper, “Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic”. The guidance divides workplaces into four levels of risk ranging from high to low based on proximity of workers to infected people and offers specific recommendations for each risk level. All employers are advised to encourage sick workers to stay home, wash their hands frequently with soap and water or a hand sanitizer, and avoid using other employee’s equipment such as telephones. The guidance is available at www.osha.gov.

The New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission is conducting comprehensive planning for a potential epidemic. Staff from the State Health and Education Departments and a workgroup of county health officials has collaborated in the development of guidelines. See www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/pandemic/.

See also www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf for a planning checklist developed by the Centers for Disease Control.

New Publication on Fire Service

OSHA is offering a new publication, “Fire Service Features of Buildings and Fire Protection Systems”. The purpose of the publication is to help increase the safety of building occupants and emergency responders by streamlining fire service interaction with building features and fire protection systems. The publication can be downloaded from the www.osha.gov.