

New York State Public Entities Safety Group 497

Safety Agenda

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Suggested Routing:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chair, Board of Comm.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chief Executive Officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Works
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chief, Fire Department
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site Administrators
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commissioners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
<input type="checkbox"/>	Elected Officials

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Firefighter Alert

Two recent hazardous material incidents in North and South Carolina are a reminder to firefighters of the importance of reviewing current procedures and continuing to work closely with law enforcement and public health officials to ensure smooth operations in large scale incidents.

On January 6, two freight trains collided and derailed in South Carolina, causing a leak of deadly chlorine gas, killing nine people and sending two hundred forty to the hospital. The fire chief and the police chief were among the dead.

A few days later, a tractor-trailer hauling petroleum in South Carolina turned over and burst into flames, fatally injuring the driver and closing the highway for most of the day.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs has called for all fire departments, no matter how small, to be prepared to respond to all hazards by being fully equipped, staffed and trained to respond.

Any Supervisor Can Run a Good Safety Meeting

The key is to understand how to plan and deliver messages that get results. Focus on specific hazards, operations and attitudes. Meetings can be formal presentations, use outside resources, or can just be informal discussions and demonstrations which deal with problems or knowledge gaps.

Focus On Hand Tool Safety

According to the Consumer Products Safety Committee, more than 100,000 injuries requiring hospital treatment due to misuse of common hand tools occur each year.

Most injuries are preventable if workers follow **five basic safety rules:**

1. Always use appropriate eye protection. Keep safety glasses and gloves easily accessible, and use them.
2. Use the right tools for the job.
3. Use tools properly, including proper body positioning to avoid musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).
4. Service tools regularly.
5. Don't use damaged tools.

Other tips:

1. Don't use pliers as wrenches. Discard them if they have chipped or dulled cutting edges.
2. Avoid glancing blows with hammers; never use a hammer with loose/damaged head or handle; use the right hammer for the job.
3. Never use a screwdriver as a punch, wedge, pinch bar, pry or chisel.
4. Use a wrench with proper size handle for the job; make sure it fits the nut, and if possible, pull instead of push. Box or socket wrenches are the safest.
5. Keep cutting-edge tools sharp. Dull tools require excessive pressure to make them cut.
6. Don't leave tools lying around where they can become a tripping hazard.
7. Minimize MSDs by keeping wrists straight and elbows close to the body.

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Hazardous Materials Storage

It is just as important to maintain a high level of safety when hazardous materials are in storage as it is to take precautions when working with them. Hazardous materials that are stored properly should not cause problems. We need to be aware of what safe storage means and how to protect ourselves in a storage area, or we run the risk of accidents.

Physical hazards inherent in storage include fire, explosion, sudden release of pressure, and reactivity. Health hazards resulting from overexposure to a hazardous substance can range from a mild skin rash to skin burns to organ damage, allergic-type reactions, cancer, or even death. Storage areas that are designed and maintained according to OSHA standards minimize the possibility of injury from those potential hazards.

OSHA regulation (CFR 1910.176) covers general safety requirements for storage areas. It requires that all aisles and passageways be kept clear and in good repair; containers should be placed carefully in tiers that are stacked, blocked, interlocked and limited in height so that they are stable and secure against sliding or collapse. Storage areas should also be kept free from accumulation of tripping hazards, fire, explosion, or pest harborage.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) are the key to hazardous material handling and storage. They explain the hazards in detail as well as the measures we can take to protect ourselves. Always check labels and MSDSs before starting any job, and wear the appropriate protective clothing and equipment. These labels also contain information that is critical to safe storage. Check the following sections:

Physical and chemical characteristics: provides boiling and melting point, when the substance could change form, and how fast or easily the chemical evaporates or releases dangerous vapors. Also, normal appearance and odor; solubility in water and specific gravity.

Fire and explosion hazard data: provides flash point temperature at which flammable liquid vapors could catch fire if they contact an ignition source. This section is especially important for storage situations.

Reactivity: provides information of compatibility – whether exposing this substance to a particular other substance could cause a hazardous reaction, or whether it is incompatible with air or water. Also check this section to find out whether the substance is stable or unstable and what temperature, pressure, etc. could cause it to change or disintegrate.

Health Hazard Data: provides information of specific health risks for you and others in the vicinity from inhaling, swallowing or skin contact with the substance.

OSHA has a number of regulations dealing with storage of specific substances or groups of substances; they should be followed carefully in the design and operation of storage areas. Storage areas should be well ventilated, have drainage, dikes and other means of keeping spills from spreading, and they should keep hazardous materials separated from anything that could trigger a hazard. Storage and handling rules should be followed carefully and emergency equipment should be available. Finally, appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment should be used faithfully.