

Safety Meeting for January 2017

Topic: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Introduction: Each year, over 200 people or more die from carbon monoxide poisoning. This is a hazard that is silent and deadly. Often times, the victim is unaware that anything is wrong until it is too late. This silent killer is not limited to just the work place but also appears to be more deadly in the home than the work place.

Background: Employers and supervisors should review the workplace for potential life-threatening exposure to carbon monoxide. Mechanics, welders, forklift operators, and other employees can be at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Often workers place themselves in danger when they forget to properly vent exhaust from vehicles or stoves. Safety procedures are a must if you use any fuel burning equipment, such as heaters and generators or work on or operate vehicles in an enclosed space or garage setting. If supervisors remind them about the dangers, employees are more likely to think about it and take the correct action.

What must an employee know: Symptoms can be headaches, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness in the beginning stages. As the conditions worsen, you experience mental confusion, vomiting, loss of muscle coordination and consciousness, and ultimately, death.

While working in closed spaces follow these simple rules:

- Insure proper ventilation is on place and works
- Keep all fuel burning equipment in good working order
- DO not allow the use of gas-powered engines in an improperly ventilated area
- Provide carbon monoxide detectors (readily available and cheap)
- Never run your car in the garage, even with the door open.
- Educate workers about carbon monoxide poisoning

The CDC offers these tips:

- Professionally service your furnace, water heater and any other fuel-burning devices every year in the workplace and at home
- Never use a generator indoors or less than 20 feet from any window, door or vent
- Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year.
- Make sure gas appliances are vented properly
- Never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm; immediately move outside, call 911 and make sure everyone is accounted for

At any time, this silent killer can strike. Carbon monoxide detectors are a simple, inexpensive backup system for garages and closed work areas. Make sure everyone knows the signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning so you can get out of the danger and to fresh air before you suffer harm.

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Safety Meeting for February 2017

TOPIC: Rollover Accidents Are Preventable

Introduction: Each year, truck drivers are killed or severely injured due to rollovers. Most, if not all rollovers are preventable. In a very small number of cases, some rollovers occur due to other vehicles that caused the mishap that led to a rollover. In the forest product industry, log trucks are the most common culprit.

Background: Rollovers occur when a vehicle is operated at conditions (most often excessive speed) that make a vehicle lose its stability. Log trailers have a higher center of gravity than a normal cargo load. It takes **.4g's** (g's - gravitational forces) or less to rollover. A car must exceed 1.3g's compared to 1.1 g's for a pickup truck or .8g's for a SUV, for them to rollover. It is extremely easy to exceed the g-forces on a log truck and trailer.

What must an employee know: Where do rollovers occur:

- Drifting off the pavement onto a soft shoulder
- Making a tight corner
- Striking a curb
- Running into a ditch
- Entering or exiting onto a ramp at excessive speeds
- Going around a curve too fast

Speed is the number one cause of rollovers. Too fast for the road conditions on a good day will cause a rollover. Add rain, ice, sleet or snow to the excessive speed and you will turn your loaded trailer over. **SLOW DOWN** and adjust to weather and road conditions.

The weight of the load can shift when a driver drifts off the pavement onto a soft shoulder. Sometimes the driver over reacts and jerks the steering wheel will lead to a rollover. So what can you do?

Load a trailer properly:

- Heavy logs on the bottom
- Loader operator should distribute the weight evenly throughout the bunks
- Make sure tie downs/binders/straps are tight before leaving the deck
- Check tie downs/binders/straps along the route as they will loosen.

Drive Smart:

- Slow down when entering or exiting onto highways.
- Use caution when turning or changing lanes
- Follow speed limit signs going into curves and adjust your speed to the weather conditions
- Keep the tires on the pavement
- Do not let cell phones or CB radios distract you
- Give yourself extra time so as not to feel rushed
- Keep following distances so you have time to react to traffic changes

Remember to give yourself adequate time, keep your speed under control and maintain proper following distances. Above all else, keep the truck and trailer on the pavement.

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Safety Briefing for March 2017

Topic: Slips, Trips, and Falls in Manufacturing Operations

Introduction: The Department of Labor reports that slips, trips and falls cause 15% of all accidental deaths in the workplace. These injuries are a close second behind motor vehicle wrecks. Additionally, the National Safety Council reports that falls are the leading cause of unintentional injuries in the United States, resulting in 8.9 million visits to the emergency room annually. This year thus far, we experienced a large occurrence of slips, trips and falls in our manufacturing operations.

What must an employee know: Companies need to have a training program specifically designed to prevent such accidents. The following are areas that employees should know:

Slips - A slip occurs when there is too little friction between a person's feet and the walking surface.

Trips - A trip occurs when a person's foot contacts an object and they are thrown off balance.

Falls - A fall can be caused by a number of things, mainly they are a result of a slip or trip.

Types of slip and trip hazards – some of the common hazards:

- Electrical cords - do not place an electrical cord directly in a walkway.
- Broken/loose stair treads - cracked or worn. Use non-skid mats.
- Wet spots or waxed floors – use caution as they are slippery.
- Carpets – Make sure rugs and carpets are not frayed and properly tacked down or have nonskid mats underneath.
- Loose flooring – Use caution near loose tiles, bricks, pavement, or floorboards.
- Different types of fluids from equipment (example: hydraulic fluid). Clean up or report all spills immediately. Don't wait for a small spill to dry itself
- Watch parking lots or any walk way for rocks, loose gravel, rain, ice and or mud.
- Debris or trash build up around and on equipment or in walkways.
- Drawers – keep them closed.
- Watch hems and cuffs so that you don't catch a heel while walking.

Types of fall hazards

- Most falls can be avoided if preventive measures are taken not to slip or trip.
- Falls – elevated platforms and stairs require mid rails and top rails.
- Maintain proper equipment i.e. steps and rails can reduce this risk.
- Walk down stairs. Do not run or jump and use the hand rail.
- Lighting – Make sure stairways and hallways are well lighted.
- Do not use makeshift ladders such as furniture or boxes. Use a sturdy balanced stepladder or a step stool made specifically for that purpose.
- Untidy floors – Even a small object on the floor, can cause a trip and fall.
- Don't jump – Lower yourself from docks, trucks, or work stages.
- Watch parking lots for potholes.

Discuss and practice good housekeeping. These procedures should reduce this type of incident from occurring on your operations. REMEMBER!!!! **"Don't make your next step your last?"**

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Safety Meeting for April 2017

TOPIC: Protect Your Eyes

Introduction: Although the human eye occupies the smallest portion of area on your body, the eyes are involved in more accidents than any other part of the body. According to a recent CDC report on eye injuries, on average each day about 2000 U.S. workers have a job-related eye injury that requires medical treatment. About one third of the injuries are treated in hospital emergency rooms and more than 100 of these eye injuries result in one or more days of lost work.

Background: Eyes need additional protection to prevent injuries. Workers can still get particles of dust, metal, wood, glass, concrete, plastic, or other hard substance in their eyes. Additionally, chemicals, acids, spark, hot oil, fire and steam are very hazardous to the eyes. Some exposure to some light sources, like the intense radiation from a welding arc, can be serious. Exposure to that intense light causes a painful burn to the cornea unless proper eye protection is worn.

What can an employer do to prevent eye injuries?

- Employers must do a hazard assessment and determine to proper protection to be worn.
- Develop a policy on how, when, where and why protection is needed.
- Chose eye protection for specific work situations according to:
 - the nature and extent of the hazard, the circumstances of exposure, other protective equipment used, and personal vision needs.
 - Eye protection should be fit to an individual or adjustable to provide appropriate coverage. It should be comfortable and allow for sufficient peripheral vision.
- Contact lenses do not provide eye protection in the industrial arena; their use without industrial quality eye or face protective devices is not permitted. If you need to wear corrective lenses on the job, wear prescription safety glasses.
- If your eye is seriously injured, cover it with a sterile oval eye pad, a clean cloth or a piece of gauze. Never use any kind of oil on the eye for first-aid treatment. If the eye has come into contact with acid or chemicals, flush the eye with plenty of water from an eye wash station. If an eyewash is not available, use a drinking fountain or water spigot.

What can an employee do to prevent eye injuries?

- Follow company policies on the wearing of eye protection.
- Keep all personal protective equipment, including eye protection clean.
- In order to prevent eye injuries, wear personal protective eyewear, such as goggles, face shields, safety glasses, or full face respirators.
- Have your eyes examined periodically. Accidents are sometimes the result of poor vision.
- Coverall goggle or face shields must be used in situations where safety glasses are not enough, such as in areas where high concentrations of dust or flying particles exist.
- Always wear face shields and or goggles when working with a chain saw, stump remover or chipper. Watch for tree branches and other objects that protrude at eye level.
- Never rub your eye if you get something in it. However, extreme caution must be taken to prevent further injury to the eye. If an object is embedded in the eye do not try to remove it. Seek medical help.

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Safety Briefing for May 2017

Topic: Overhead Hazards

In a previous meeting we discussed some trends associated with the logging industry. For your review, trends are described as a reoccurring type of incident or act. Previously, the trends of working too close and falls have been studied. This column will deal with overhead hazards; **look up!**

Over the past ten years, serious life threatening injuries and deaths have occurred and the majority have happened in the woods during the spring season; more specifically, most happen during the leaf out period when the trees gain their canopies. As we come to that time of the year again, we must not become complacent. At any time of the year, whether spring, summer, fall or winter, we can lose focus on our jobs in the woods. All year long, the root cause of these injuries has been overhead hazards. Unfortunately, our jobs are inherently dangerous; one wrong decision can prove catastrophic in a heartbeat. You must stay focused on the job at hand. Please take the time to have a safety briefing with your crew on **OVERHEAD HAZARDS**.

- Use approved, well maintained personal protective equipment (PPE) for head protection.
- Look and scan at least 50 ahead on your ground path.
- Look for fallen branches in your path as they indicate overhead hazards.
- Look and scan for at least 100 feet ahead for all overhead hazards.
- Stay away from lodged trees. Mark them as danger trees to keep others away from the hazard.
- Do not place your body under anything that can fall due to gravity or the loss of hydraulic pressure.
- Maintain at least two tree lengths from all felling areas. (300 feet or 100 yards)
- Be visible, wear high visibility clothing so machine operators do not throw debris or trees at you.
- Maintain communication with everyone in the work area.
- Never walk into a work area with running or moving equipment until the equipment is stopped, engine cut-off and the hydraulic attachments grounded.

In nearly every accident, it is the ground personnel who are most at risk from hazards from above. As a team, work together and stay focused. Take the time to look for overhead hazards, identify the hazard, tell everyone about it, and remove it or flag it to keep personnel away. Your proper decisions will result in a happy holiday season for all. LOOK UP!

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Safety Meeting for June 2017

Topic: FIRST AID

Introduction: There is a requirement that first-aid supplies must be provided and the OSHA standards provide a list of required items based upon the type of business and the number of workers you employ.

Background: Even a small scratch, cut, puncture wound or burn can become infected. And unless properly cared for, cleansed or protected, it can lead to blood poisoning or introduction of dangerous organisms into the bloodstream. Whenever you give first aid to others, always protect yourself from exposure to bloodborne pathogens by wearing gloves, masks, and eye protection. While it is best to leave major first-aid treatment to those who have professional training, all workers should know basic first aid.

WHAT EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES NEED TO KNOW:

- ❑ Whatever you use as a dressing to stop the bleeding, it must remain in place until treated by a professional. If more dressing is required, place it on top of the original dressing.
- ❑ In case of a broken bone, you should be able to apply a splint to immobilize the limb.
- ❑ If a victim is in contact with electricity, make sure the current is off before attempting to help the victim, or use a nonconductor, such as a dry wooden pole to remove the victim from the contact. If necessary, have an experienced person perform CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- ❑ If the eye is splashed with an irritant, immediately flush the eye with clean water for at least 15 minutes.
- ❑ Never try to remove any objects from an eye with a sharp instrument. Grasping the upper lashes and pull the upper lid out and down. Often the object will attach to the inside of the upper lid and be swept away by tears. If the injury is serious, put a clean cloth or gauze pad over the eye.
- ❑ An average adult can lose one pint of blood in 15 to 20 minutes without serious danger. To stop heavy bleeding, first elevate the limb (if no fracture is suspected) and apply direct pressure to the affected area.
- ❑ When treating for shock - ensure the victim can breathe comfortably and place covers under and over victim. If they are unconscious place them on their side and monitor the airway.
- ❑ A deep puncture wound is perhaps the most likely to become infected; this is even more likely than the torn edges of a laceration. Apply antiseptics to cleanse the wound to prevent infection.
- ❑ Heat Exhaustion - may result from physical exertion in hot environments. Symptoms may include profuse sweating, weakness, paleness of the skin, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, headache, vomiting, and unconsciousness. The skin is cool and clammy with sweat. Body temperature may be normal or subnormal. First Aid - Rest in the shade or cool place. Drink plenty of fluids water.

Always protect yourself before you help the injured. If you become incapacitated, you are no help to the person needing the first aid.

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Safety Meeting for July 2017

Topic: “**Three-Point Rule**” reduces risk of injury

Introduction: I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW that getting on and off equipment and vehicles accounts for 1 out of every 4 injuries to equipment operators or truck drivers. Some of these injuries have been quite severe. Too many times, a simple fall turns into a disabling injury involving knees, ankles and sometimes spine/back injuries.

Background: Studies of accidents reveal statistics shows employees are not using proper mount/dismount techniques from equipment. To avoid these types of injuries, it is important to understand the “Three Point Rule” which states quite simply, **AT-ALL-TIMES**, you **MUST** keep three points of contact with the ground or the equipment until you are stable.

What must an employee know: The biggest cause of falls from a vehicle, equipment or ladder is human error - failure to follow the “Three Point Rule.” It requires three of four points of contact to be maintained with the vehicle or ladder at-all-times – two hands and one foot, or both feet and one hand. This technique allows maximum stability and support and reduces the likelihood of slip and falls.

There are important steps that can be taken to prevent mounting/dismounting injuries with use of the Three Point Rule being most important. **An employer should do the following to ensure the safety of their employees:**

- Conduct safety meeting with employees about using the “Three Point Rule”.
- Evaluate trucks, logging equipment, and ladders for serviceability and safety.
- Provide additional steps, non-slip surfaces and hand holds where necessary.
- Maintain steps, contact surfaces and handholds in useable condition. Inspect frequently.
- Install warning decals or signs in the cab or on the door of trucks and h reminding workers to use 3-point contact.

Employees should do the following to reduce the risk of injury:

- Keep truck and equipment steps, ladders and surfaces free of debris.
- Don't use the doorframe or door edge as a handhold.
- Wear footwear with good support and slip resistance.
- Don't try to exit a vehicle with something in your hand.
- Descend slowly to avoid straining a muscle.
- Always mount or climb down while facing the truck or the equipment.
- Get a firm grip on rails or handles.
- Never Jump off from a step or ladder before you reach the bottom or surface

Remember these simple rules and you will have substantially reduced your chance of injury when getting on (or in) as well as off (or out) of a vehicle, equipment, and ladders.



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Safety Meeting for August 2017

Topic: Three Limbs of Risk

Introduction: Let's take a close look at the risk associated with most logging jobs. One underlying factor must remain constant, **SAFETY!!!** Three broad categories account for most of the risk on logging jobs. The three main limbs of risk are:

OVER-HEAD HAZARDS

Without a doubt over head hazards represent a major limb in logging risk. Catastrophic injury and death are the result of this ever-present risk on our jobs. To fight this risk, we must be aware and LOOK UP!!

- Proper head PPE is mandatory on the logging job.
- Look Up and Out! Identify possible risk from above.
- Don't place your body under anything that could fall, this includes equipment.
- Maintain at least two tree lengths from any felling operation.
- Be visible!!! Wear high visible clothing.
- Use proper felling techniques.

MAINTAIN PROPER WORKING DISTANCES

The second big risk factor to conquer is working too close. Ground personnel and moving logging equipment can create extreme risk. Awareness is the key for avoiding a "too close" incident.

- Proper PPE is to be worn at all times.
- High visibility clothing is essential. If I can see you, I won't hurt you!!
- Maintain at least two tree lengths from any felling operation.
- Maintain proper distance from skidding activities. Toppers should use shield trees whenever possible.
- Machine operators should never enter a "safe zone" provided for ground personnel.
- All employees must be aware of "blind spots" on the logging equipment.
- Be especially cautious in and around the deck area, it's a busy place!

SLIPS/TRIPS/FALLS

Slips, trips and falls plague our industry. While this section may seem a silly to high light, let me assure this type of incident is no joke! Very serious injuries occur frequently in and around a logging operation.

- Be alert and aware. Be focused! Keep your mind on the business at hand!
- Always use the **3-point of contact** technique while mounting and dismounting equipment.
- Keep platforms, steps and handles free from grease, oil and other foreign material.
- Maintain a firm grip while entering or exiting a machine.
- Proper footwear with good ankle support is mandatory. (No sneakers)
- Avoid climbing or walking on felled trees or limbs.
- Stay on the "uphill" side of felled timber and limbs.
- When not cutting, make sure the chain brake is engaged.

Focus on the Big Limbs of risk and then venture out on the smaller limbs to deal with specific risk. Good examples of this strategy would be including training on lock and tag out, tension wood, proper felling techniques etc. These subjects are all sub-divisions of the three "Big Limbs." Tackle risk in this manner gives us a complete package for avoiding an incident. Make the New Year's resolution to operate safely.

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Safety Meeting for September 2017

Topic: TRUCK DRIVERS – Distracted Driving

Introduction: We can't truly multi-task. Our brains juggle tasks, performing only one task at a time. We screen out information to deal with distractions overload which leads to "Inattention blindness." This is a big risk: **we look** but don't always see crucial things when we are distracted while driving. Sometimes the results are not too severe: missed exits, running red lights and stop signs, missing important signage and forgetting where you are going. Unfortunately, it can have deadly results. Crashes are highly likely, resulting in thousands of unnecessary injuries and deaths.

Background: The "National Safety Council" tracks vehicle crashes across our great Nation and has released some staggering facts:

- 1.6 million crashes per year can be attributed to cell phone talking and texting while driving.
- Every time you text and drive, you are 26 times more likely to be involved in a serious crash, which includes; reaching for device, dialing & talking and listening.
- Having your eyes off the road an average of 4-6 seconds when driving and texting is like having your eyes closed the equivalent length of a football field.
- 1 in 5 drivers confessed to surfing the web while driving, this includes Twitter, Facebook & GPS.
- Inexperienced drivers tend to speed and follow the vehicle in front of them too closely. This is a dangerous mix, especially when distracted by texting and driving.
- About 6 times more likely to cause an accident than driving intoxicated.
- The same as driving after 4 beers.
- Takes place by 800,000 drivers at any given time across the country.
- Slows your brake reaction speed by 18%.

What employees must know: Driving requires your full attention. There are 3 forms of distraction:

- Manual / Physical (hands leaving the steering wheel)
- Visual (eyes off the road)
- Cognitive (mind off the road)

Be aware- Texting involves all three of these distractions. **DO NOT TEXT AND DRIVE!!!!**

Truck drivers are the most unsupervised employee in a workforce. Know the laws in your state and have a company "cell phone use policy" in place. Where policies allow, Bluetooth is the only recommended device if talking is necessary. Step up and protect your employees and your property.

- Provide safety rules, review policies and laws
- Relay your company expectation's - this is the most important communication you can have to protect your employee's, company's assets and reputation
- Do not allow a truck driver to hit the road without this knowledge. By the way, your company's name on the truck should concern you enough to make sure you have the right truck driver driving your truck, you get what you accept.

For additional information on Distracted Driving, visit their website at www.nsc.org Safety on the Road – Distracted Driving.

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Safety Meeting for October 2017

Topic: **Motor Vehicle Accidents are Preventable**

Introduction: Work-related motor vehicle accidents are the leading causes of workplace injury for our company. Injuries that result from these accidents range from bumps, bruises, paralysis, and to loss of life. Employers- remind drivers to pay attention to the road and weather conditions.

Background: Accidents studies reveal statistics that drivers do not account for road or weather conditions and their attention is distracted by different things such as eating, drinking, talking to a passenger, or texting.

Following too close and not accounting for road conditions or weather are the leading causes cited by police officers. It does not matter if you drive a semi-truck, pick-up truck, motorcycle, or automobile, use a common sense approach to your driving. You cannot control the other driver's actions, but you can control your driving decisions.

Have you driven on the highway and witnessed drivers doing other things then driving? One insurance company came up (from accident reports) with a list that people admitted to doing. The number one distraction is obvious - phone distractions of texting and talking. The list includes some amazing items:

- taking selfies
- applying makeup/curling eyelashes/styling hair
- reading/ scratching off lottery tickets
- changing clothes
- singing and dancing
- romantic encounter/PDA
- brushing/flossing teeth
- putting in contact lenses or eye drops

An employer should do the following to ensure the safety of their employees:

- DO NOT GET BEHIND THE WHEEL if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- It's the law - Always wear your seat belt!
- Keep both hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
- DO not eat or drink while driving. Have you ever spilled a drink or dropped a chip?
- Do not tailgate!
- In congested traffic - back off and allow proper braking distance between vehicles.
 - Use the 3-second following rule – it can prevent a rear end collision.
 - Glance at a fixed object (sign, light pole, or tree) ahead of the car in front of you.
 - As the car in front passes the object, count 3 seconds (one- thousand one, one-thousand two, one-thousand three). If you pass the object at 3 seconds, you have enough braking distance to stop.
 - In heavier traffic, you must adjust your following distance. Add a few more seconds to give you room to stop.
 - At night and in bad weather, increase your following distance even more.
- Slow down for the road conditions you travel. Speed is the leading cause of vehicle accidents.
 - Faster speeds decrease your ability to react to sudden hazards.
 - Road conditions (rain, ice, fog, etc.) create stopping distance hazards.
- Drive defensively. BE PREPARED for the other driver or their unsafe actions.
- Pay special attention at intersections – watch out for the drivers trying to beat the light.
- In many states, it is against the law to talk on a hand-held phone. In most states, it is against the law to drive and text. Use a blue-tooth or hands-free device with voice activated commands.

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Safety Meeting for November 2017

Topic: Driver Injuries on the Rise

Introduction: On any given day, tractor trailer drivers face many challenges and hazards. Watch the evening news and you hear about rigs that are involved in rollovers, head on collisions, or other incidents that hurt or injure individuals. While these accidents get sensational news coverage, far more drivers are injured because they are in a hurry and make simple mistakes. These incidents involve slip, trips, and falls. They affect more drivers daily than the big ones that make the evening news. They happen anywhere such as at home, the deck or landing, or at the mill and they all involve the driver as they enter or exit his/her rig. Slips, trips and fall injuries remove valuable drivers from the job and sidelines them until a doctor releases them back to work.

Slips, Trips, and Falls: As drivers enter or exit the cab, 3-points of contact are required to prevent slips or falls off the steps. Look at the area you will step onto to make sure there is a solid surface.

Some of the injuries that have occurred are sprains and strains, bruises, contusions, lacerations, and fractures. The body parts injured from slips, trips and falls include knees, ankles, feet, wrist, elbow, hip, back and shoulders. Lately, the most frequent injuries we see are shoulder blades. The tears in the rotator cuff occur as drivers try to catch themselves from a fall or a missed step.

Many of our simple actions are aggravated because of ice, rain, muddy boots or smoothed soled boots. But lately, many injuries have occurred because they jump down instead of using 3-points of contact. Jumping from the cab causes sprains or broken bones in feet or legs as you impact the hard surface. Another area of increasing injuries has happened as drivers exit a cab with too many items in their hands. When you have too many items in your hands, it prevents the driver from using 3-points of contact. Remember, the 3-points of contact is defined as two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand.

Safety Tips for entering or exiting the tractor:

- Always check before exiting the cab - look before you step out to make sure there are no holes.
- Always stretch your legs before exiting after long drives to get the blood flow.
- Always make sure that the tractor's steps are cleaned and free of debris like ice, mud and snow.
- Always make sure the steps are firmly secured.
- Always make sure the mounting brackets are not broken or broken.
- Always face toward the tractor when exiting.
- Always use the hand rails and keep a firm grip on the grab bars.
- Always maintain three points of contact - two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot.

Take time to think about how you can safely enter or exit the truck. A few seconds of consideration to look at the steps and ground as well as using 3-points of contact will prevent the injuries we described. They are painful and will impact your quality of life and ability to get around. Don't become a statistic for us to write about for the next article.

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Safety Briefing for December 2017

Topic: Cold Weather Injuries

Introduction: I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW that cold stress, or "hypothermia," can occur any time of year? In fact, most cases of cold stress develop in air temperatures between 30 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Background: Winter weather is just around the corner, but did you know employees who are exposed to lower temperatures are at greater risk for injuries ranging from frostbite to serious loss of body heat which could result in brain damage or even death.

What must an employee know: To protect yourself from cold weather injuries:

- ❑ **Dress warm:** Preserving an air space between the body and the outer layer of clothing will help retain body heat. Choose fabrics such as cotton or wool, which insulate but also allow sweat to evaporate. It is especially important to protect the feet, hands, head, and face. These parts of the body are farthest from the heart and are the hardest to keep warm.
- ❑ **Keep dry:** Wetness greatly increases the chance of cold stress. Always have extra clothing available if there's a chance you could get wet. Keep feet dry, they are very susceptible to frostbite.
- ❑ **Take a break:** You may think it's wise to keep on working in cold temperatures. After all, working makes you break a sweat and you feel warmer. But if you become fatigued during physical activity, your body loses its ability to properly retain heat. This causes rapid cooling which can quickly lead to cold stress.
- ❑ **Eat right:** A proper diet provides your body with the nutrients it needs to withstand cold stress. A restrictive diet may deprive your body the ability to work well in cold temperatures.
- ❑ **Don't work alone:** In cold-stress prone environments, a buddy system should be used. Look out for one another and be alert for the symptoms of cold stress.
- ❑ **Learn what to look out for:** The effects of cold stress may not be apparent to its victim. The first symptoms of hypothermia are uncontrollable shivering and the sensation of cold. The heartbeat slows and may become irregular, and the pulse weakens. As the condition worsens, severe shaking or rigid muscles may be evident. The victim may also have slurred speech, memory lapses, and drowsiness. Cool skin, slow, irregular breathing, and exhaustion occur as the body temperature drops even lower. This is a serious condition requiring immediate medical attention.
- ❑ **Frostbite:** can occur without accompanying hypothermia. Frostbite occurs when the fluids around the body's tissues freeze. The most vulnerable parts of the body are the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes. Symptoms of frostbite include coldness and tingling in the affected part, followed by numbness; changes in skin color to white or grayish-yellow, initial pain, which subsides as the condition worsens, and possibly blisters. Frostbite can cause irreversible tissue damage and requires immediate medical attention.

Remember, it doesn't have to be freezing for cold stress to occur. Take steps to protect yourself.

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