



Hudson River Valley Chapter Newsletter

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Useful & Helpful Links

<http://www.assp.org>

Link to the National ASSP webpage for information on great topics in EH&S. Go look things up.

<http://hudsonrivervalley.assp.org>

Link to the Hudson River Valley Chapter web page. Information on the Local items and events as well as good information. Try it, you'll like it!

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

Link to the Center for Disease Control. Great current information on health items to help protect us all through illness controlling and prevention. Lots of good items!

Hotlinks in articles are in **Bold Red font.**

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Final Beryllium Standard for General Industry.

OSHA has published the final revised rule for beryllium standard for General industry. The final rule includes changes designed to clarify the standard, and simplify or improve compliance. These changes maintain protection for employees while ensuring that the standard is well understood and compliance is simple and straightforward.

The final rule amends the following paragraphs of the beryllium standard for general industry: "Definitions," "Methods of Compliance," "Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment," "Hygiene Areas and Practices," "Housekeeping," "Medical Surveillance," "Hazard Communication," and "Record Keeping." It also has a new Appendix A: "Operations for Establishing Beryllium Work Areas."

The compliance date of this final standard as modified is September 14, 2020. OSHA has been enforcing most of the provisions for general industry since December 12, 2018. The agency began enforcing the provisions for change rooms and showers on March 11, 2019, and engineering controls on March 10, 2020. The final standard will affect approximately 50,500 workers employed in general industry and is estimated to yield minor net cost savings to employers.

To review the modified standard click [**here**](#):

OSHA Did You Know: Masks at Work.

The medical/surgical or cloth masks worn at work for COVID protection are designed to be loose fitting and they can be removed periodically. They do not cause carbon dioxide build up or compromise oxygen levels. Some people mistakenly argue that standards for Air Contaminants, Respiratory protection, and permit Required Confined Space apply to the issue of oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in work spaces with normal ambient air (healthcare settings, offices, retail, construction). They do not apply to these types of masks in this work environment. They are for the prevention of spreading the infectious droplets from the wearer. These standards would only apply to work settings where there are known/suspected sources of chemicals or to enter a portentously dangerous location (e.g. a large tank/vessel).

Off-Set Fixed Ladders Personal Fall Protection Confusion?

Are you confused about the need/requirement for personal fall protection, or a ladder safety system on newly installed off-set fixed ladders in an environment outside of roofing type work? You could benefit by reviewing the following scenario if you work on these types of jobs.

The scenario is: Multiple sections of off-set ladders are being designed to be installed on the outside of a grain silo more than 80 feet in height. Rest platforms will be installed at each off-set and will be fitted with OSHA compliant guardrail systems. The rest platforms measure 3 feet by 3 feet in area. Some of the ladder sections are less than 24 feet in length.

The confusion is: Does each section of ladder above 24 feet from the ground require a ladder safety system or is the 24 foot height measured from rest platform to rest platform?

The Letter Of Interpretation from OSHA states: Under 29 CFR 1910.28(b)(9)(i)(B), employers must ensure that each new fixed ladder extending more than 24 feet above a lower level is equipped with a personal fall arrest system or a ladder safety system. For purposes of determining whether a fixed ladder extends more than 24 feet above a lower level within the meaning of 29 CFR 1910.28(b)(9)(i), the employer must measure the distance from the ground/lower level to the top of the fixed ladder. The distance a ladder section is located above the ground or a rest platform, and thus the distance that a worker climbing on the ladder could fall, determines whether a personal fall arrest system is required. If the fall distance exceeds 24 feet, regardless of the length of the ladder section, the employer must equip the fixed ladder with a personal fall arrest system or a ladder safety system.

Furthermore, if the size of the rest platform is such that a worker climbing the fixed ladder could fall past the platform and more than 24 feet to the ground or a lower level, the employer must equip the ladder with a personal fall arrest system or a ladder safety system. In the example provided, where the rest platform measures 3 feet by 3 feet, it is possible that a worker climbing the fixed ladder could fall past the platform to a lower level. Thus, the distance the ladder is considered to extend above a lower level would be measured from the ground and not from the lower rest platform.

The above example and LOI were from a real question submitted to OSHA for interpretation. If you do not know an answer when it comes to worker safety – please reach out and ask for help or advice. It is free, and can save a life.

In my personal experience after 40 years as the EH&S Manager Field Support covering several states in the Northeast Region of a large communications company, I have found that it is easier to work with a regulatory agency when you ask them for help with an issue, instead of waiting to be interviewed or questioned in a fatality investigation.

Believe me, from OSHA down to your local Dept. of Labor, they would rather work with you to prevent an incident in the first place, rather than having to arrive on your site with the intent of finding the cause of a fatality or major incident.

Compliance Assistance Highlight - Support for Nursing Mothers at Work.

The Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division now has guidance for employers on the break time for nursing mother's provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Wage and Hour Division would like to acknowledge the balancing act of hardworking mothers trying to excel at work and at home. During this hard challenging time of coronavirus pandemic August is National Breastfeeding Month and what better time to learn about these new workplace provisions for working and breastfeeding mothers. Data shows that 80% of new mothers in the United States begin breastfeeding and more than half of new mothers are in the workforce. Use this link to access other informational links on the new provisions including a Spanish version plus FAQ's: <https://blog.dol.gov/2020/08/18/supporting-nursing-mothers-in-the-workplace>. More available information can be found here: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/nursing-mothers>.

Top Reasons Employees Call-In Sick To Avoid Mental Illness Stigmas.

A new study conducted by Aetna International revealed that more than one in three employees admitted that they lied when calling in to take a sick day. The top three reasons cited by these employees for lying when they called in revolved around mental health issues, or mental health stressors. The fourth most common reason given for the lie was because they thought that their boss would not understand a mental health issue because of the stigma attached to “Mental Health Issues” in society.

As the world’s attention turns to the mental health impact of COVID-19, these confessions raise some grave questions around the stigma that is embedded in our workplaces.

In a random survey of 1,000 office-based employees in Singapore, the UK, the United Arab Emirates, and the US, the study found that while ‘wanting a day off’ was the second most frequently cited reason for lying. The study pointed out that the most common reasons overall related to mental and emotional health.

The statistical breakdown was as follows:

1. 32% lied because they were feeling stressed
2. 30% said they were simply ‘feeling down’
3. 24% said just not ‘feeling themselves’
4. 23% of workers lied because they didn’t think their boss would understand

To further complicate the issue, the results also revealed that employees are twice as likely to take time off for a physical health issue (66%), than a mental health problem (34%). The report therefore suggested that while people take time off for mental health, they may not admit the reasons.

Regionally, employees in Singapore are the most honest when it comes to telling their employer about the reasons for taking a sick day. In fact, 75% of employees in Singapore have never lied to their employer about the reasons for taking a sick day, which is higher than the global average of 64%.

Employees in the US, however, are the most likely to lie to their employer. Close to half (45%) of Americans admitted that they lied to their employer about the reasons for taking a sick day.

The survey also showed that across all regions, only one in three employees took zero sick days in 2019.

This could suggest that workers are either rarely ill or are deciding to work despite their illness. This was especially true for the UK, which had the highest number of employees without a record of a sick day off (41%). The UK also had the lowest number of employees taking at least 11 sick days, suggesting either a healthier population or a potential stigma around taking sick days in that Country.

“As a third of employees feel the need to conceal mental illness, anxiety or stress-related reasons for taking a sick day, it’s clear that there is still a high degree of stigma around mental health in the workplace,” said Dr. Hemal Desai, Global Medical Director at Aetna International. “While some of this will be cultural, there’s clearly more that needs to be done to help line managers and employees navigate mental health at work. The experienced doctor, who serves under NHS in the UK, advised employers to take steps to improve openness and transparency on mental health issues at work.

For instance, employers can better communicate their policies on mental and behavioral health as well as the legal framework. “It is important for management to foster a safe environment for employees to share the nature of their personal illness with their line manager – be it mental or physical,” he said. Employers should also work towards creating a culture of support when it comes to employee health and well-being, added Dr. Desai. “In this day and age, it’s not acceptable for employees to fear workplace discrimination when they’re experiencing mental illness,” he said. “It’s particularly important at the moment as people and organizations alike grapple with the ‘second curve’ of the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of emotional and psychological issues.” Your written HR policies should cover mental health issues of employees.

Thought Of The Day.

“Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.” -- *Robert Frost*

Study Links Heavy Lifting at Work to Risk of Detached Retinas.

A study conducted by University of Massachusetts @ Lowell found that regularly lifting objects that weigh 30 pounds or more is one of several “strong predictors” of – and most correlated to work related retinal detachments or tears. Researchers surveyed 200 participants with a retinal detachment or tear and 415 healthy control participants. They all answered questions about their general health, vision and physical exertion.

The participants who lifted 30 pounds or more regularly at work were 1.8 times more likely to experience a retinal detachment or tear. The other strong predictors were age, gender, body mass index, myopia (nearsightedness), family history and cataract surgery. “The biggest takeaway is safe lifting practices, which protect your back, can also protect your eyes,” lead study author David Kriebel, a professor in the public health department at UMass Lowell, said. “Thirty pounds is not a threshold for what’s safe versus dangerous to lift. Our research suggests that reducing lifting may reduce the risk of retinal detachment.”

Kriebel suggested that workers follow practices in NIOSH’s **Ergonomic Guidelines for Manual Material Handling**. The relationship between age and increased risk rose sharply from 40 years old to about 65 – where it peaked – then dropped quickly beyond 80. Further, a nearly threefold increase in detachments and tears was found among participants with myopia. In addition, retinal detachments and tears were more likely to be experienced by men, participants who had family members who had suffered a retinal detachment or tear, and those who had a cataract surgery on the same eye more than three months before the incident. “These workers should consult with an ophthalmologist about whether they should adopt extra precautions, beyond standard safe lifting practices as detailed in the NIOSH guidelines,” Kriebel said. “Workers with eye conditions, including past cataract surgery, retinal detachment or a recent posterior vitreous detachment, may be at increased risk of retinal detachment.”

Chapter Chatter

Our Chapter held an Executive Board Meeting Thursday August 13, 2020 using the ZOOM on line teleconference service. The decision made was adopted by motion and seconded to move our 2020 Hudson River Valley Chapter PDC from October 23, 2020 to April 16, 2021 due to concerns over the op-up locations of COVID-19 in the area.

Please note the following schedule changes and re-arrangements due of chapter activities due to COVID-19 have resulted in major changes to the Chapter’s schedule of meetings. The schedule is now as follows:

- 1 - A Chapter Board Meeting is scheduled to be held on October 15th, 2020 on the ZOOM platform.
- 2 - A Technical Meeting originally scheduled for September 18th, 2020 has been rescheduled and will now be held on October 23rd, 2020 at the Rockland County Training Center. More info will come on this.
- 3 - A Joint meeting with ASSP NYC Chapter, and the Mid-Hudson Safety Council that was to be held in January 2021, will be moved up to take place on September 30th, 2020. This will be a virtual meeting.

All future changes and/or rearrangements will be announced as soon as possible by email messages. Your Chapter Leadership is committed to keeping you safe as possible during this pandemic.

Minutes of all chapter meetings, old issues of the Newsletters, and most of the Presentations of Technical Meetings going back to 2016 are published on our chapter webpage for you to review to see what was covered during those meetings, or in those Newsletters. This is the link to the files page on our website for you to see these chapter documents: <https://hudsonrivervalley.assp.org/files/>.

Stay safe, and stay healthy. Hopefully we can meet face to face soon. If needed for any questions you may have about our Chapter activities, or to submit an item to be published, my email contact address is:

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