

PREVENTING WORKPLACE INJURIES AND ILLNESSES

Awareness Session

Worker Occupational Safety & Health
Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP)

Commission on Health and Safety
and Workers' Compensation

2010



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University of California, Los Angeles
10945 Le Conte Avenue, Suite 2107
Box 951478
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1478
(310) 794-5964
losh.ucla.edu



Northern California
Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP)
University of California, Berkeley
2223 Fulton Street, 4th Floor
Berkeley, CA 94720-5120
(510) 642-5507
www.lohp.org



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One Shields Avenue
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(530) 752-4050
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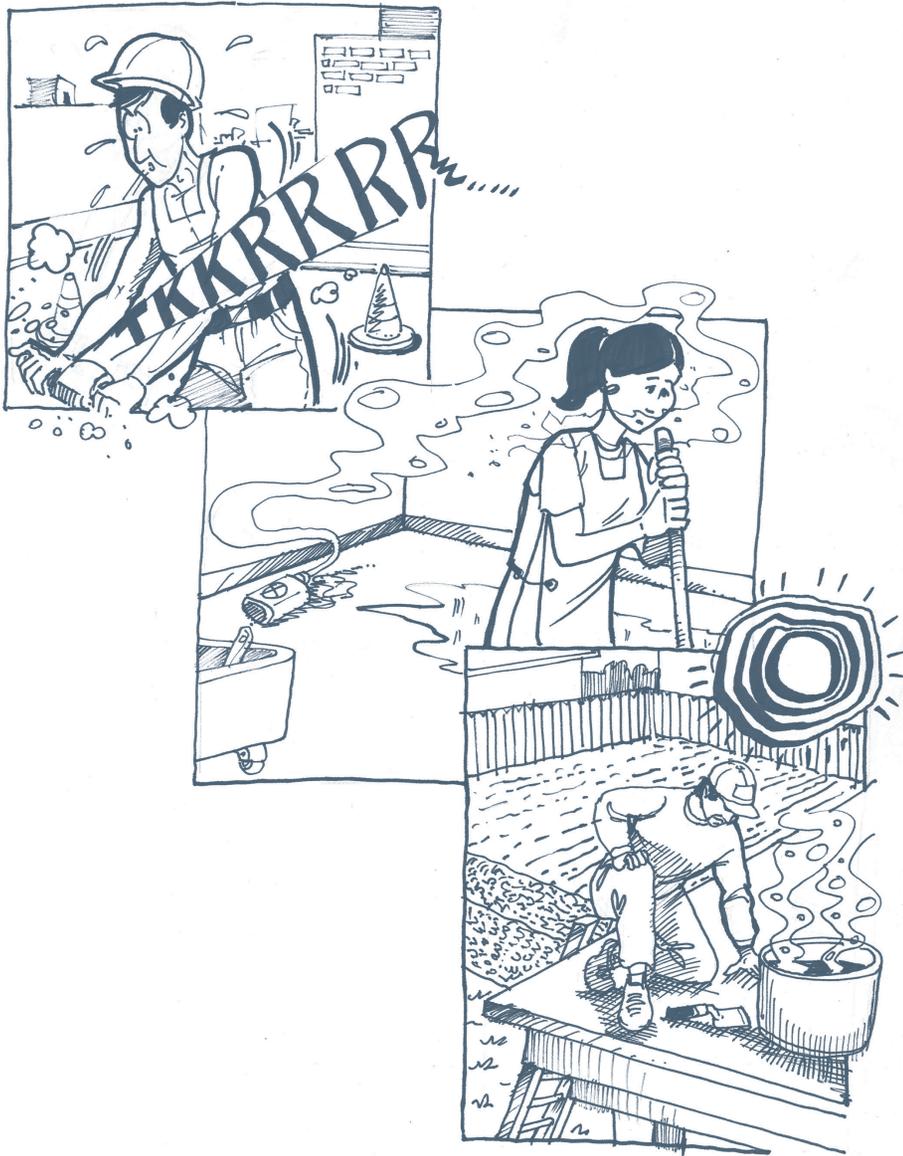
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND HEALTH

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND HEALTH



Many factors affect our health: what kind of food we eat; how much water we drink; whether we get enough rest and enough exercise; or whether we smoke or drink alcohol. **Workplace conditions and the type of work we do can also affect our health.**

At work, we may be exposed to hazards that cause illnesses and we may carry out activities that result in serious injuries. Each type of work may expose us to different hazards.

We need to ask ourselves:

- **How does the work I do affect my health?**
- **What should I do to protect my health?**

We need to learn to identify what health problems may be work-related and what working conditions may be causing them.

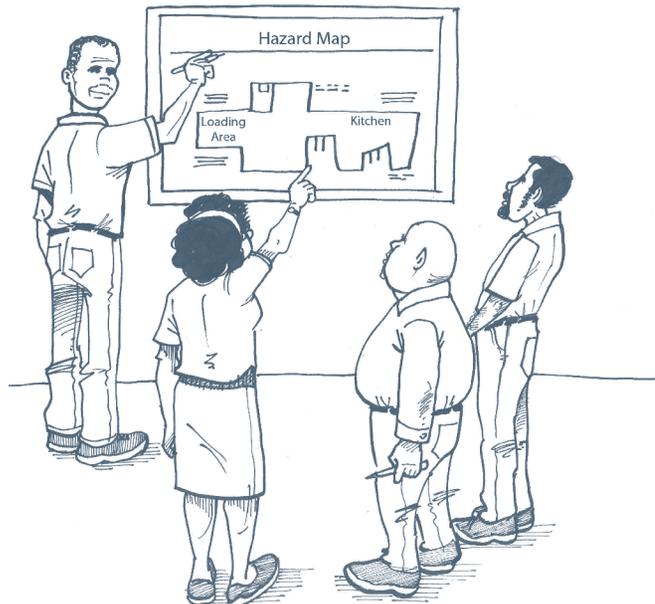
For example, if we feel pain or discomfort in any part of our body, we should ask ourselves:

- **Does the pain increase when I do my work?**
- **Is it related to a forceful or repetitive movement I am doing?**
- **Is it related to an unhealthy condition at my workplace?**
- **Is the same thing happening to my co-workers?**



Workers should talk about what affects their health and safety at work. They can draw a picture of a body to mark where it may hurt on their own body. They can talk with each other about why it hurts. This is called a **body map**.

Workers can also draw a simple floor plan of their workplace and mark on it the working conditions that have caused or could cause injuries or illnesses. This is called a **hazard map**.



When we are hurt at work, we should analyze the causes. Some hazards cause immediate injuries and are easy to recognize, such as a hot surface. However, other hazards are much harder to recognize because they:

- Cause injury to internal organs and we are not aware of it.
- Cause injury over time; months or sometimes years later.
- Cause symptoms that we do not associate with work.

WHAT HAZARDS MAY BE PRESENT IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

Some working conditions can cause immediate injuries. Examples include:

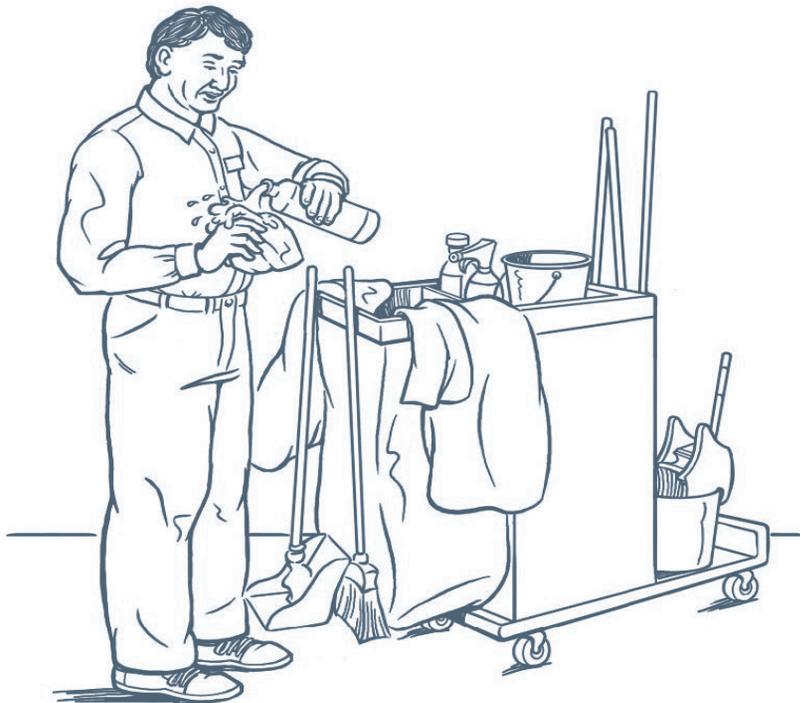
- Hot surfaces, hot oil or grease
- Slippery or uneven floors
- Unsafe ladders or lack of training for their proper use
- Working at heights
- Working too quickly
- Unguarded machines
- Knives and other sharp objects
- Electrical equipment or wire that is defective or in contact with water
- Lack of fire exits or blocked fire exits
- Cluttered work areas
- Poorly designed tools
- Heavy lifting
- Inadequate lighting
- Vehicles (cars, tractors, forklifts, etc.)
- Working in a confined space (any area that is difficult to get in or out of)
- Unshored trenches that can cave in
- Unidentified utility gas and fuel lines that may explode if punctured
- Chemicals that can cause a fire or explosion
- Workplace violence (assaults, threats, verbal abuse, robberies)



Some and substances present in the workplace can make you sick. For example:

- Paints, solvents, glues.
- Cleaning materials.
- Materials used in manufacturing.
- Pesticides.
- Gas, diesel and other fuels.
- Construction materials (such as silica and asbestos in the dust produced when breaking concrete).

Some cause problems right away, but others take time.



You can get diseases from contact with sick people, objects and waste found in hospitals and other public places, and while working in humid, dirty or contaminated workplaces where there are hazardous organisms such as:

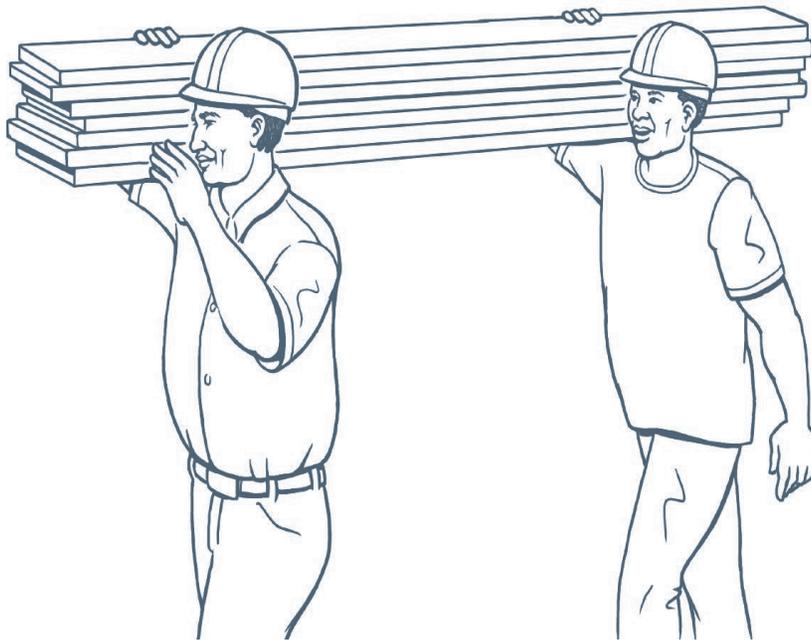
- Bacteria (such as the one that causes tuberculosis).
- Viruses (HIV and the hepatitis virus).
- Mold.
- Animals and insects.



Some workplace conditions, such as badly designed work spaces and equipment that is old and broken can cause wear and tear of workers' bodies. With time, the results can be pain and damage to the hands, arms, neck, back, feet, or legs.

Conditions that can cause these injuries include:

- Performing the same motion over and over again.
- Using physical effort such as pushing, pulling, and lifting.
- Prolonged contact with a hard surface or edge.
- Working with vibrating tools or equipment.
- Working in a way that puts strain on the body, such as stooping, bending, reaching overhead, or staying in one position too long.



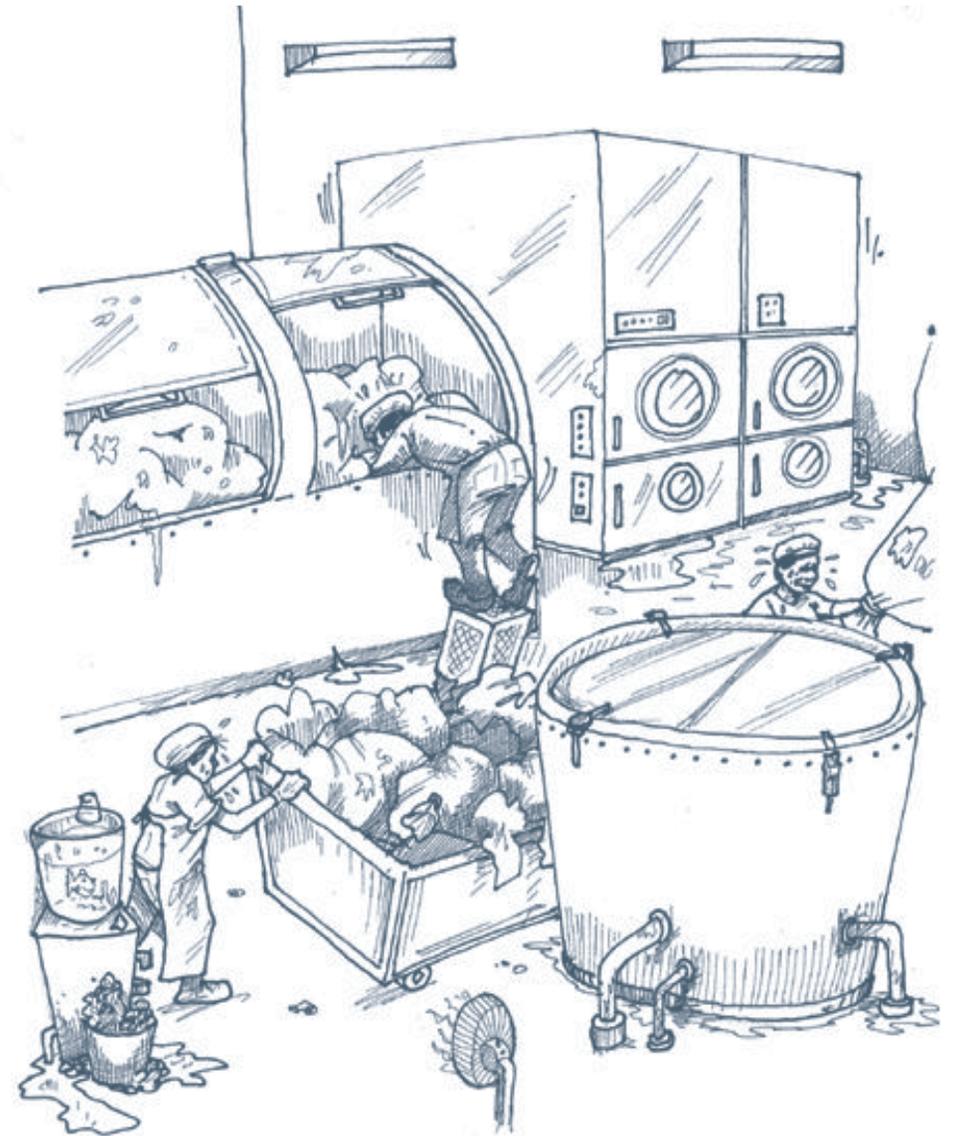
There are many factors in the workplace that can create anxiety, frustration and fear. The body's response to chronic stress can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, and emotional disorders. Causes of stress can include, for example:

- Work overload and production pressure.
- Fast work pace.
- Harassment or discrimination.
- Job insecurity.
- Shift work or rotating shifts.
- Threat of workplace violence.
- Lack of input or control on the job.



The health of workers can also be affected by physical conditions of the workplace. Examples include:

- Extreme cold or heat.
- Poor indoor air quality.
- Workplaces with too much noise from machines and equipment.
- Workplaces with too much, or not enough, light.
- Exposure to radiation when working with machines that produce radiation such as x-ray machines or electric welding arcs, or with materials that contain radiation such as hospital waste.



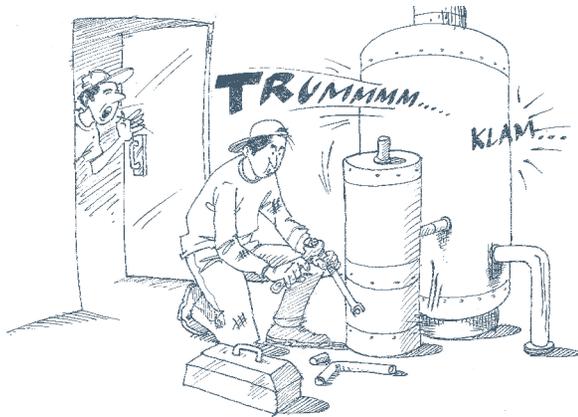
INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS

INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS

To prevent illnesses or injuries at work, it is necessary to identify all the possible causes, get to the root cause of the problem, and if possible, eliminate the hazard once and for all.

There are many working conditions we don't realize are hazardous. These include working very quickly, operating defective, unfamiliar equipment, or handling dangerous substances without training.

If a workplace has a high noise level or poor lighting, accidents may occur and, with time, workers may lose their hearing or vision. The poor lighting and high noise are job hazards, and if workers cannot tell their supervisors about these problems, then this lack of communication also becomes a job hazard.



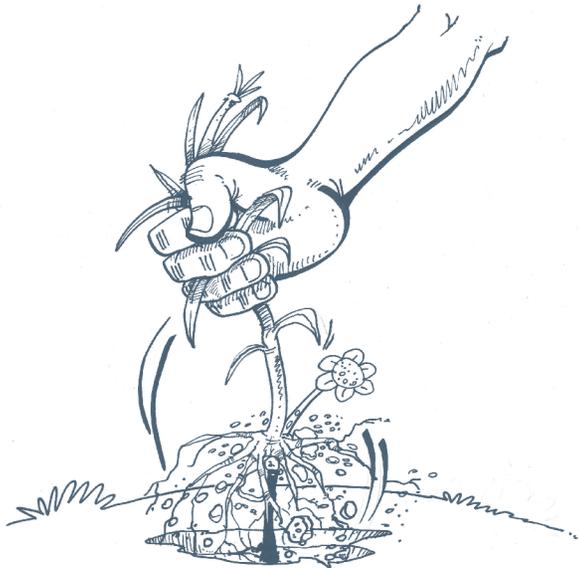
To protect the safety and health of workers, it is necessary to identify factors such as work pace and work load, whether machines and equipment have received maintenance, physical working conditions (such as hygiene and temperature) and how well-informed workers are about hazards.

This is why we need to ask ourselves several times WHY an accident happened or almost happened, or why a worker became ill. For example, say Maria hurt her eyes because she was not using her protective goggles:

- **Why wasn't Maria using the goggles?**
...Because they did not fit.
- **Why didn't Maria have the right size goggles?**
...Because she did not know there were different sizes.
- **Why didn't she know?**
...Because she did not receive safety training.
... Because there was no fit testing.
...Because her supervisor never asked if the goggles fit.



WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS?



We should differentiate between two types of solutions to protect the health and safety of all workers:

- **Solutions that change a worker's behavior.**
- **Solutions that change the working conditions, as well as the attitude and behavior of all workers.**

The most effective solutions are those that change working conditions to make it easier for all workers to act more safely in the workplace. In the example in the previous page, instead of reprimanding Maria, the most effective solutions would be to provide safety training and fit testing, and to maintain regular communication with all workers.

Changes that eliminate the root cause of a problem are solutions that help prevent further accidents or illnesses.



RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS

In the United States, there are laws that are designed to protect the health and safety of workers. These laws regulate the relationship between employers and workers. By law, the employer has the responsibility to provide a safe workplace for workers. In turn, workers should actively participate in the health and safety program developed by the employer.

Workers have three basic rights:

- **The right to know**
- **The right to act**
- **The right to be protected**

THE RIGHT TO KNOW

Workers have the **RIGHT TO KNOW** about:

- Their rights and responsibilities
- The hazards present in their workplace
- The laws that protect them
- The injuries and illnesses incurred by other workers

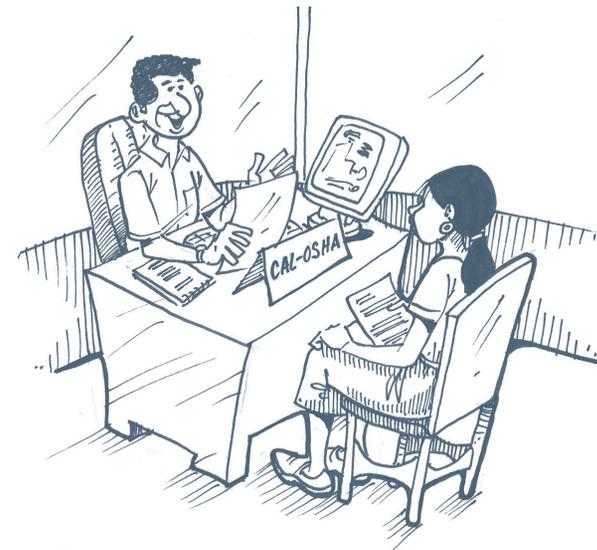
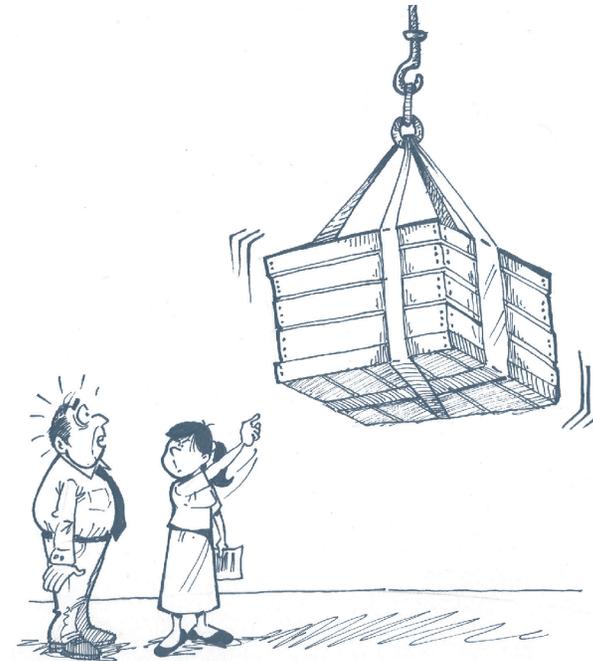
They also have the right to be trained by the employer as required by law. This includes training on how to do their job in a safe way and on how to prevent injuries and illnesses.



THE RIGHT TO ACT

Workers have the **RIGHT TO ACT**. For example, they have a right to:

- Talk to the supervisor or employer about an actual or perceived hazard.
- Ask the employer to eliminate work hazards that can affect them.
- Participate in a health and safety committee.
- Talk to co-workers to look for similarities in their work situation and how their health may be affected.
- File a complaint with the appropriate governmental agency if they think there is a hazard that is violating one of the laws that protects them. (They may request confidentiality in their written complaint if they don't want the employer to know who filed the complaint).
- Participate in a government safety inspection of their workplace and be informed of the results of the inspection.



THE RIGHT TO BE PROTECTED

Workers have the **RIGHT TO BE PROTECTED** at work. This means they have a right to work in a safe and healthy workplace.

The employer is legally responsible for providing a workplace free of hazards. The workplace should be in compliance with the rules and regulations established by the **Occupational Safety and Health Act**.

EXAMPLES OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EMPLOYER:



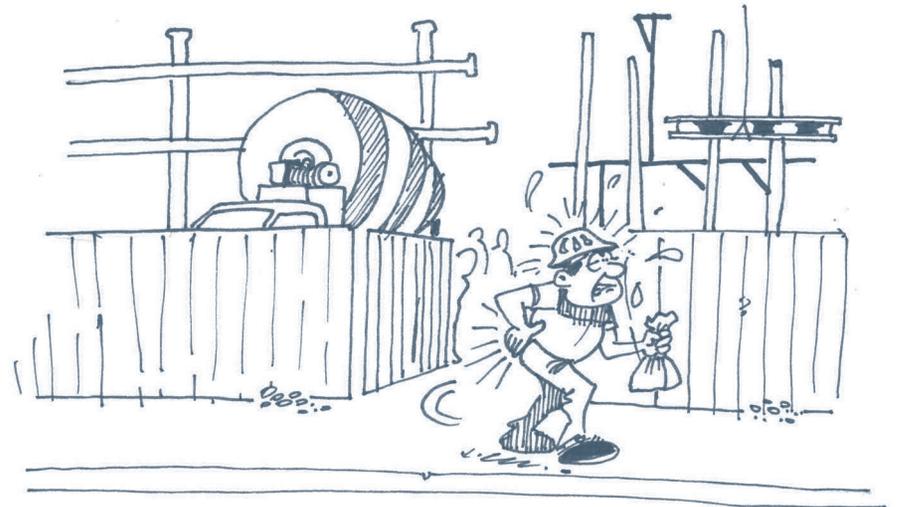
- Regularly examine working conditions to identify and eliminate hazards and ensure that applicable safety regulations are enforced.
- Verify that workers have and know how to use tools and equipment correctly.
- Use color codes, posters or signs to indicate possible hazards and bring them to the workers' attention.

- Establish a written hazard communication program.
- Label containers of chemical products and provide detailed information about the hazards associated with materials used at work.
- Provide medical exams and training as required by workplace health and safety regulations.





- Report any accident or injury to the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) and document all accidents and injuries.
- Not discriminate against workers who exercise their rights under the law.
- Acquire insurance to compensate workers for injuries or illnesses caused by work. This insurance should provide:
 1. Medical care
 2. Compensation for temporary disability
 3. Compensation for permanent disability
 4. Supplemental Job Displacement Benefit
 5. Compensation in case of death



HELPING WORKERS RETURN TO WORK AFTER AN INJURY

Just as employers should develop a preventive plan for workers' health and safety, they must set up a workers' compensation program. It should include:

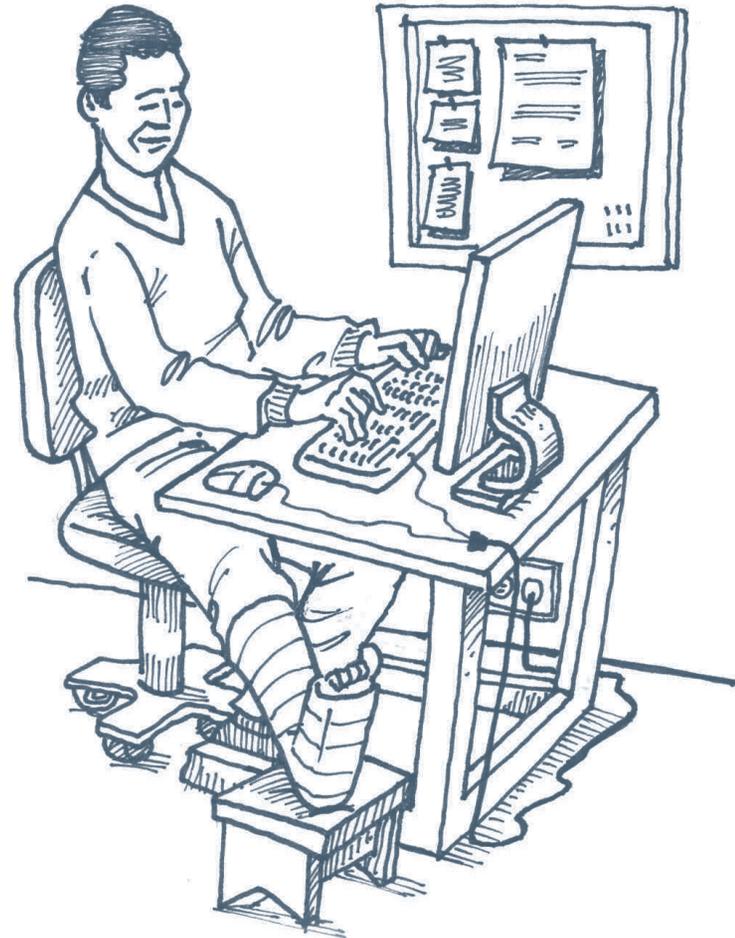
Information about the basic benefits of the worker's compensation program, the person in charge of this program at the workplace, and what to do in case of injury.

An easy way to report incidents and accidents, including efforts to ensure workers feel free to report an injury immediately without negative consequences.

Support for injured workers, which means that both company and medical personnel should provide efficient and courteous service.

An easy way for injured workers to return to work, including clear policies and procedures, assigning light duty that can be carried out within the limitations determined by the injured workers' doctor, and re-integration of the worker as a valued member of the work team.

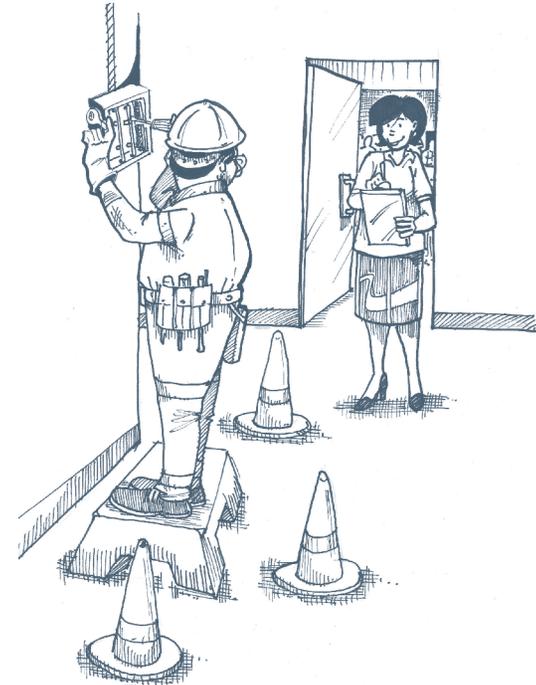
Preventive measures, which means that the workers' compensation program should be linked to the injury and illness prevention program.



EXAMPLES OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKERS:

- Request and look for information about health and safety regulations that apply in their workplace.
- Follow the rules and regulations as established by their employer's health and safety plan.
- Use the personal protective equipment that is provided to them at work.
- Notify their supervisor of all hazardous conditions.
- Notify their employer of any injury or illness associated with work and seek care promptly.
- Exercise their legal rights and responsibilities responsibly.

Safety and health in the workplace are part of our overall health. Workers should be able to go home safe and sound to be a vital part of their families and communities. It is important for workers to know the rights that protect them, their responsibilities, and the best way in which they can participate in effective workplace health and safety programs.



**WHAT ACTIONS
CAN WORKERS TAKE
TO PROTECT THEIR
HEALTH AND SAFETY
AT WORK?**

WHAT ACTIONS CAN WORKERS TAKE TO PROTECT THEIR HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK?



- Learn about their rights and responsibilities.
- Learn about hazards in their workplace.
- Look for information so they can understand the problem more fully.
- Document the problem.
- Report hazards or injuries immediately.



- Think of the root causes to reach effective solutions to the problem.
- Talk to co-workers so that everyone is aware of hazards and can support each other.
- Talk to the employer and suggest solutions.



- Talk to the health and safety committee, if there is one, or take steps to create a committee.
- Ask for help from a labor or community organization that provides worker services.
- Contact the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) and file a complaint.



GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES THAT PROTECT WORKERS' HEALTH AND SAFETY

WHAT IS CAL/OSHA?

The federal agency that establishes laws and regulations regarding workplace safety and health is called the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). It is a government agency that belongs to the United States Department of Labor. It is also in charge of enforcing these laws.

In California, there is a corresponding state agency which is mandated by federal OSHA to provide equal or increased protection for workers. This agency is called the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA).

Cal/OSHA establishes that ALL workers are protected under its laws, including temporary or part-time workers and workers who are not legal residents, except:

- People who are self-employed.
- Family members of farm owners who work on the family farm.
- Federal employees working in California.



THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION SYSTEM

The workers' compensation system also exists to protect the health of workers. It mandates that employers obtain insurance to compensate workers in case of injuries or illnesses.

Workers' compensation insurance protects ALL injured workers regardless of who or what caused the injury or illness. Workers' compensation includes coverage for:

- Temporary and part-time workers
- Workers who are not legal residents

In other words, workers' compensation applies even if the worker only works part-time or if the worker is not a legal resident of the United States. Workers' compensation coverage is not affected by who was responsible for the incident that caused the injury or illness.



NOTES

NOTES

HELP AND SUPPORT

Cal/OSHA--California Occupational Safety and Health Administration

California state program responsible for protecting the safety and health of workers by developing and enforcing regulations.
(800) 963-9424
www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH

For information on how to file a complaint about safety and health and hazards in your workplace call your district office:
Los Angeles-(213) 576-7451
Oakland-(510) 622-2916

California Worker's Compensation System

Compensation benefits for workers injured on the job.
(800) 736-7401
www.dir.ca.gov/dwc

Division of Labor Standards and Enforcement (DLSE)

State agency dedicated to enforcing minimum labor standards.
Los Angeles-(213) 620-6330
Oakland-(510) 622-3273
www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE

Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation (CHSWC)

Oversees the health and safety and workers' compensation systems in California.
(510) 622-3959
www.dir.ca.gov/chswc

The following three programs train workers, frontline supervisors, union representatives, and community leaders to improve workplace safety and health.

UCLA-LOSH--Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program

University of California, Los Angeles
(310) 794-5964
www.losh.ucla.edu

LOHP-Labor Occupational Health Program

University of California, Berkeley
(510) 642-5507
www.lohp.org

WCAHS-Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety

University of California, Davis
(530) 752-4050
agcenter.ucdavis.edu

WORKSAFE!

Provides technical assistance, training, and legal advocacy for safe and healthy workplaces.
(510) 302-1011
www.worksafe.org

California Partnership for Young Worker Health and Safety

Provides young workers with information to about their rights and responsibilities as well as injury and illness prevention.
(888) 933-TEEN (8336)
www.youngworkers.org

CRLA – California Rural Legal Assistance

Provides California farm workers and low income families no-cost legal representation and education in areas of health, housing, civil rights, family security and employment.
(415) 777-2752
www.crla.org

SoCalCOSH Southern California Coalition on Occupational Safety and Health

A coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to promote worker safety and health through education and legal advocacy.
(213) 346-3277
socalcosh@gmail.com

IN LOS ANGELES:

Garment Worker Center

Aims to better the conditions of garment workers.
(213) 748-5866
www.garmentworkercenter.org

KIWA-Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance

Educates and assists low-wage immigrant workers in Koreatown.
(213) 738-9050
www.kiwa.org

IDEPSCA--Institute of Popular Education of Southern California

Helps students, workers and Latino communities using popular education.
(213) 252-2952
www.idepsca.org

IN THE BAY AREA:

California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative

Advance a preventive environmental health agenda to assure the health and safety of the nail and beauty salon communities.
(510) 986-6830 x 267
www.cahealthynailsalons.org

*** Ask your instructor for information about other local community based organizations.**