

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Describe the role of government agencies in providing for a safe workplace.*

Objectives:

- A. Explain how lack of knowledge and skills can cause accidents and health hazards.
- B. Describe health and safety hazards that exist in the workplace.
- C. Explain the importance of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA).

MODULE 5C: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read and study this information sheet and complete the student activities at the end of this module.

Accident Prevention

Preventing accidents on the job is not something that individuals can do alone. It is and must be a cooperative effort among employees, and government. Not all accidents are the fault of the victim. Some are caused by the victim's environment.

The three-way partnership for safety

Until 1970, the responsibility for making workplaces safe was left to state governments. Workplace conditions had improved steadily during the twentieth century, but in the 1960's, accident rates suddenly began to climb. At the same time, new occupational diseases were being discovered. In 1970, there were about 14,000 worker deaths, and 2.5 million workers injured. An untold number were being made ill by the materials they worked with. Many workers feared they would lose their jobs if they complained to the government about the conditions. Others were not aware of the hazards in their workplaces. In response to these problems, Congress passed the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

This act set up the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to create health and safety standards for business and industry. The act also established each employer's legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthful workplace.

**(This is also CAPS Module 9, used with permission.)*

OSHA is the watchdog that checks businesses to make sure they are following the rules, but the system of safety and health regulation is actually a three-way partnership. OSHA receives much of its information about workplace conditions from employers and workers. The Administration encourages workers and employers to cooperate in making workplaces safer.

Government's role

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was created by Congress in 1970 to determine safety and health standards for the world of work. OSHA decides what the lowest acceptable levels of safety will be. The agency's inspectors can force company officials to appear in court when they find workplaces that do not meet the minimum standards.

The legislation that created OSHA states that both employers and employees have responsibilities as well as rights. It says that each employer must provide a job site free from safety and health hazards. It also says that employees must obey the rules listed in the Occupational Safety and Health Act. For example, where required, workers must use protective equipment. For OSHA rules applicable to your job, see the OSHA poster at your job site.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is another government agency that makes our country safer for everyone. The EPA tries to protect the environment. By doing this, it protects our health. Reducing air and water pollution is one of the main goals of the EPA.

Many scientific groups wrote reports that showed the need to protect the environment. These scientists studied air pollution in large cities. They analyzed water pollution in rivers and lakes and found that pollution, which can cause serious diseases, had reached dangerous levels in some areas. As a result of these studies, the EPA was given certain powers. Among them was the power to limit the amount of smoke and fumes released into the environment by automobiles and factories.

Your right to know

In order for you to know if there are hazards in your workplace, you need to know the OSHA guidelines for your industry. Your employer must make these standards available to you. If you need more information on hazards, you can contact the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). This group collects data about accidents and illnesses and recommends new standards. The Institute does research into effects of new substances on workers. It also funds studies that examine links between chemicals and cancer.

What employers can do

Employers have a number of tools that they can use to ensure workplace safety. Principally, they can provide their employees with safety equipment and training and then back these efforts up with an enforcement program.

Employers should do more than teach employees the right way to do things. They should make employees aware of the consequences of doing things the wrong way--especially if those consequences include physical harm. Employees should also be provided with safety equipment--hard hats for work areas where falling objects might be a hazard, goggles or safety glasses for those working with cutting tools, and seat belts in any vehicles that must be driven on the job. Finally, use of both the procedures and the equipment should be enforced by supervisory personnel.

Employers can also take advantage of the services offered by safety specialists. They can consult with engineers to remedy safety problems with equipment. They can implement the recommendations of government inspectors who visit their facilities.

Correcting hazards

After the OSHA inspector has inspected the workplace and has evaluated the company's records, he or she meets with the representatives of the workers and management. This meeting is designed to point out hazards and suggest solutions. The inspector then reports to the OSHA area director, who decides if any citations for violations will be used. An OSHA citation states the nature of the hazard, what should be done about it, and the date by which it should be corrected. Employees then work with management to correct the problem.

What you can do

By law, employers must provide a workplace that is free of physical hazards. Dangerous conditions can occur, however, if workers or employers take shortcuts that bypass safety rules.

An employer can do only so much to protect his or her workers. After that, the workers must protect themselves. They must accept responsibility for their own safety.

Here are some minimal safety guidelines that you should observe on any job:

1. Use safety equipment provided. Sometimes, workers remove safety guards to make a task quicker or easier to do. For example, someone might lift the safety shield on a grinder for a better view of the substance in the machine. That exposes the moving parts, which can trap the worker's hand. This should be of more interest to you than it is to your employer. After all, if you are injured on the job, your employer can only lose money (to pay for your medical expenses or disability coverage). You, however, can lose your health – perhaps for a lifetime.
2. Know your equipment. This means more than knowing how to use a particular machine or tool properly. It means understanding its potential for harm and knowing what to do if anything does in fact go wrong. Some machines, especially older models, were not designed with safety in mind. Workers may be endangered, even though they are as careful as possible. Management should be notified about such situations.
3. Poor lighting. For anyone from a metal cutter to a gardener, poor lighting increases safety risks. In poor light, a gardener may not see the obstacles in the lawn mower's path. A metal cutter may not be able to guide the cutting tool correctly. Employers should be told if lighting is not adequate.
4. Poor ventilation. Fumes and dust in the air can endanger workers. The fumes from operating a gas forklift in an enclosed area can make workers sick. Adequate ventilation in the workplace is vital. When this is not possible, workers must wear breathing masks.
5. Know your limitations. Overcome them if you can. If not, accept them. By pushing yourself beyond your limits, you risk injuring yourself and possibly even others.

Use good safety habits

As you learn about your job, make safety skills a habit. Put on your safety equipment before you start work. Keep your work area free of clutter. Follow the safety rules posted by each machine. Be alert for possible hazards, and report any hazardous conditions to management. Show that you are concerned for the safety of others.

Learn your job and your workplace

To avoid accidents, learn all you can about your job. Do not be afraid to ask questions about a process you do not understand. Invest time in practicing the skills your job requires.

For more detailed information about the Pennsylvania Community and Worker Right to Know Act and Regulations, go to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry web site: www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/site/default.asp

For general information about the regulations for specific industries, see: www.osha.gov

The Employee Right-to-Know

OSHA Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200)

The law requires that chemical manufacturers and importers...

- evaluate products and determine whether there are any health hazards associated with using them.
- communicate their findings via labels and Material Safety Data Sheets for each product they manufacture.

The law requires that your employer...

- establish a written Hazard Communication Program that explains exactly how he is going to inform you and your fellow workers about hazards and how to handle them. You should be able to see this program at any time.
- label products appropriately.
- obtain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS's) for all products with physical or health hazards. These documents should be kept in a place where you can easily refer to them.
- train you to identify and deal with hazardous materials and make you aware of any new hazards introduced into your work area.

Before you start any job, YOU should...

- read labels and MSDS documents.
- identify any hazardous materials and get the proper equipment to work with them safely.
- always use proper techniques to perform your tasks--and be familiar with emergency procedures.
- ask your supervisor when you have any questions.

Everyone--government, manufacturers, your employer--everyone wants you to be safe. That's why these laws were developed. But your safety is up to YOU. So take advantage of the law. Inform yourself, learn how to use chemical products safely, and be sure to exercise the little extra care that's called for.

**EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE NOTICE
(NONMANUFACTURING EMPLOYEES)
WORKER AND COMMUNITY RIGHT TO KNOW PROGRAM**

THE PENNSYLVANIA LAW 1984-159 - WORKER AND COMMUNITY RIGHT TO KNOW ACT PROVIDES FOR INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS REGARDING HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES INTRODUCED INTO THE WORKPLACE AND INTO THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT BY EMPLOYERS SUBJECT TO THE LAW.

THIS INFORMATION INCLUDES:

WORKPLACE NOTICE - Employers must prominently post this notice informing employees of their rights under this law. This notice must be posted in every workplace at a location where employee notices are normally posted.

TRAINING - Employers must provide an annual education and training program to employees exposed to hazardous substances or hazardous conditions. The training program may be presented either in written form or in training sessions.

LIST OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES - Employers must compile a list of all hazardous substances found in the workplace, including special hazardous substances and environmental hazards. This list must be posted in the workplace and must be updated annually. In addition, upon request, an employer must furnish to an employee a list of the hazardous substances used or produced in the employee's work area.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE SURVEY FORM (HSSF) --The Hazardous Substance Survey Form is a document that provides a listing of the hazardous substances, special hazardous substances and environmental hazards found in the workplace.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD SURVEY FORM (EHSF) --The Environmental Hazard Survey Form is a document that provides information regarding those hazardous substances emitted, discharged or disposed of from the workplace and designated by the Department of Labor and Industry environmental hazards. A copy of the Environmental Hazard Survey Form for a specific workplace may be obtained by contacting the Department of Labor and Industry.

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET (MSDS) -- The Material Safety Data Sheet is a document that provides detailed information on chemical substances. Any employee or employee representative has the right to obtain and examine an MSDS for any hazardous substance or hazardous mixture in the workplace. If the employee's request is made to the employer in writing, after five working days from the date the request is made, an employee can refuse to work with the substance if: (1) the employer fails to furnish the employee with an MSDS in his/her possession or (2) the employer fails to furnish the

employee with proof that the employer has exercised reasonable effort to obtain the requested material from the manufacturer, importer, supplier, distributor and Department of Labor and Industry.

LABELING -- All containers in the workplace containing hazardous substances, hazardous mixtures, single chemicals and mixtures must be properly labeled. The employer must ensure that each label, sign, placard or other operating instruction is prominently affixed and displayed on the container or port of a pipeline system, so that employees can easily identify the substance.

NONDISCRIMINATION -- Any employee who believes he or she has been discharged, disciplined or discriminated against by an employer for exercising his/her rights granted under the law has one hundred eighty days from the violation to file a written complaint with the Department of Labor and Industry, Right to Know Office.

The employees' rights as listed above are further defined in the Worker and Community Right to Know Act. For additional information, contact the Department of Labor and Industry, Right to Know website: www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/site/default.asp

MODULE 5C: STUDENT ACTIVITIES

TO THE STUDENT: After reading and studying the above information sheet, complete these activities to demonstrate your understanding.

Answer the following questions:

1. Match the following terms with their definitions.

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|-------|---------------|---|
| _____ | 1. OSHA | a. National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health |
| _____ | 2. NIOSH | b. a visit to a work location to identify unsafe conditions |
| _____ | 3. Penalty | c. Occupational Health and Safety Act |
| _____ | 4. Inspection | d. a letter on unsafe conditions sent by an employee |
| _____ | 5. Complaint | e. fines or prison terms |

2. What do you think the government should do to provide for your on-the-job safety?

3. What do you think your employer should do to provide for your safety?

4. What can you do to provide for your own health and safety?

5. Write two paragraphs about an accident you have seen. In the first paragraph tell what happened. In the second, tell what you think could have been done to keep it from happening. (Use the back of this page if needed.)

6. Write to your nearest OSHA office. Ask what a worker should do if unsafe working conditions or practices exist and have not been corrected at the worker's company.

7. Write to the EPA. Ask for information about how the agency works to protect the environment and your health.

8. Look around the room you are in. In the three columns below make a list of safe and unsafe conditions in this room. Make some suggestions to correct the unsafe conditions.

MODULE 5C: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work**13.2.11. Career Acquisition (Getting a Job)**

- E. Demonstrate, in the career acquisition process, the application of essential workplace skills/knowledge, such as, but not limited to:
- Commitment
 - Communication
 - Dependability
 - Health/safety
 - Laws and regulations (i.e. Child Labor Law, Fair Labor Standards Act, OSHA, Material Safety Data Sheets)
 - Personal initiative
 - Scheduling/time management
 - Team building
 - Technical literacy
 - Technology

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

1.4.11. Types of Writing

- D. Maintain a written record of activities, course work, experience, honors and interests.

1.5.11. Quality of Writing

- A. Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
- Identify topic, task and audience.
 - Establish and maintain a single point of view.

- B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
- Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
 - Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
 - Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.
- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
 - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
 - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).