



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

Safety and Loss Control News

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Prepared by Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc.

Proper Lifting and Ergonomics

Sarah, the parish office manager, had nearly tripped several times over a box of copy paper someone had left on the floor in the supply room. To prevent her coworkers from becoming injured, she decided to pick the box up, intending to place it up on a nearby counter top. She bent over, lifted the box, and began moving it to the counter. As she turned to place the box on the counter, she felt a pop followed by extreme pain in her lower back. She let out a scream and fell to her knees.

Fortunately, the pastor was nearby and came to her aid. Sarah could not move. The paramedics were called and Sarah was taken to the emergency room. The injury resulted in Sarah being unable to work for six weeks while she recovered.

Strains and injuries are not limited to those who do heavy labor. Hundreds if not thousands of injuries happen in parishes across the country every day. Many of these injuries are similar to Sarah's; they happen quickly and are immediately noticeable. Others, however, happen over a period of time. What we do know is that these injuries can cost both the parish and individuals time and money. Occasionally, these injuries are unavoidable, but most can be prevented. The need for proactive training cannot be overstated.

Lifting

Lifting injuries are painful and costly, but are also preventable. A quick search on the internet will provide hundreds of web sites and information about how to lift properly. Though there may be some slight variations, most experts agree on the following proper lifting techniques:

1. **Focus on the task: test, plan, path.**
2. **Move in close to the load.**
3. **Bend at your knees—not at your waist.**
4. **Tense your stomach muscles, keep your back straight, and avoid unnecessary twisting.**
5. **Hold the load close to your body.**
6. **Grip the load firmly using your palms.**
7. **Gently lift the material using the strength of your legs and not your back.**
8. **As you lift, control the speed and force of the lift.**
9. **Turn with your feet and don't twist your body.**
10. **If the material weighs more than 40-45 pounds, do not lift it. Use a mechanical aid such as a dolly or "team lift" with someone who is of equal strength.**

Safe lifting practices often include discussion on the topic of back belts. The pros and cons of back belts continue to be a widely debated topic among safety professionals. Many have concluded that back supports are most effective when used with an overall back injury prevention program. It is important to remember that back supports will not prevent back injuries if proper lifting techniques are not used and may give the user a false sense of security. However, when used correctly, back belts provide support to the lower back and help to prevent bending at the waist when lifting an object.

Ensuring that safe lifting practices are used in the parish setting can be accomplished by training employees and volunteers, and helping them know their physical limitations. Not only should proper lifting guidelines be posted, but employees and volunteers should be required to follow them. Oftentimes, a person who is either out of shape or older, will try to do something that they used to be able to do, only to find out after injuring themselves, that they are no longer able to do this.

Designating a healthy, trained employee to do heavy lifting not only helps to prevent injuries, but is also a great way to practice mercy.

Office Ergonomics

In addition to the injuries that result from unsafe lifting practices, injuries can also occur as a result of improper ergonomic conditions within the workplace; in particular, office workstations. Office workstations present a number of risk factors to employees that can be easily corrected. Repetitive motion injuries from using the keyboard and mouse, eye strain due to poor lighting and muscular stress from improper posture at the workstation are just a few of these risks.

The solution to office workstation ergonomic issues is to conduct an Ergonomic Evaluation of each workstation. This evaluation targets the areas of the workstation that could present physical problems to employees and evaluates the workstation in relationship to the employee who utilizes that space. The risk factors examined include:

Desktop organization:

Frequently used items should be placed within the employee's normal reach area. This includes placement of the telephone, pens and



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pencils, stapler, paperclips, paperwork, etc. A well-organized desktop reduces the risk of injuries due to twisting and turning.

The height of the desk and chair:

Proper posture while sitting creates a neutral body position, which removes unnecessary stress from the body. Make sure the chair height is set so the feet rest firmly on the floor or on a footrest. The employee's thighs should also form a right angle to their shins while sitting. At the same time, the seat of the chair should be high enough in relation to the work surface so that the forearms can be positioned at a right angle to the upper arms.

Lighting:

Be sure that there is enough lighting present to prevent eye strain. Also check to make sure the lighting does not produce a glare on the computer screen, which can also result in unnecessary eye strain.

Placement of the keyboard:

Position the keyboard close enough to the body so that the employee's fingers can easily reach the home keys of ASD and F on the left, and JKL semicolon on the right. Keep in mind that all of this should be done while maintaining a neutral or stress-free position with the arms. In addition, consider using a wrist rest. This is a support device with rounded edges and a comfortable cushion. It provides support to the wrists in a comfortable, neutral position and reduces pressure on the median nerve of the wrist.

Mouse location:

The mouse should be a comfortable distance from the keyboard so that the employee does not have to reach for it.

Height and level of computer screen:

A bad viewing angle or having the eyes too close or too far from the screen can lead to eye and neck strain. Place the monitor 20-40 inches away from the eyes, and position it so that the employee's eyes look down at a 15 to 20 degree angle.

Document holders:

Keep the document holder on the side of the computer corresponding to the employee's dominant eye. This helps to eliminate back and forth neck motions that can cause fatigue and pain in the shoulders and neck. It also reduces eye strain by avoiding constant refocusing.

After the evaluation is completed, employees and volunteers should be encouraged to plan out their work area and the work that will be done. In addition, consideration should also be given to pacing their workload. Employees and volunteers should rotate tasks so the same work is not done continuously for long periods of time. In addition, relaxation techniques such as stretching should be taught and encouraged, along with adequate breaks.

If an employee or volunteer experiences pain or a strain, they should report their condition immediately. If the condition persists, they should see a doctor. Addressing these issues early can prevent long-term damage.

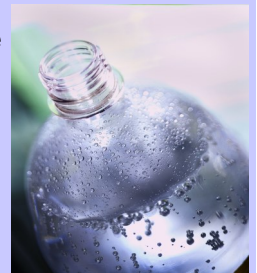
Conclusion

Parish employees and volunteers should be protected and provided the best environment possible for their mission. Training, planning, communication and supervision should all be a part of the service environment. It is important for parish leaders to take the time and energy necessary to providing a safe, healthy and happy work environment. Everyone involved will benefit from such a proactive approach to ministry protection.



Hydration Key to Avoiding Daytime Fatigue

Water makes up about 60% of your body weight. In fact, water plays a role in every system of your body. Water is used to remove wastes, regulate body temperature, transport nutrients and oxygen to your cells, cushion and protect vital body tissues and organs and also dissolves vitamins and minerals so your body can use them.



Lack of water is the number one trigger of daytime fatigue and even mild dehydration can slow your metabolism as much as 3%. There is preliminary research that also indicates that drinking 8-10 glasses of water a day could reduce back and joint pain for up to 80% of sufferers.

Your body loses fluids everyday just by performing its natural functions. It is important to replace these fluids by drinking water. Without enough water, your body won't function smoothly and may even become dehydrated. It is recommended that we drink eight, 8-ounce glasses of water each day. Some good ways to achieve this are by:

- Keeping a bottle of water with you throughout the day
- Drinking a glass of water when you get up in the morning
- Taking regular water breaks
- Drinking a glass of water for every soda you consume
- Drinking water with meals

When using bottled water for your main source of water each day, consider that different brands of bottled water contain varying amounts of fluoride. Fluoride helps prevent tooth decay. Risk of tooth decay may be higher with the reduced intake of fluoride.

Lawn Mower Safety Reminder

During the summer months, parishes make great efforts to keep grounds neatly groomed and safe for visitors. Weekly lawn mowing is one important activity for maintaining parish grounds. Push mowers are the most common type of mower used and while they do an excellent job of maintaining grounds, without proper training and safety guidelines they can be dangerous.

In a nine-year study published by the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* in 2004, it was found that an average of 74,000 emergency visits resulted from lawn mower injuries each year. During the last year of the study (2004), an estimated 80,539 emergency room visits occurred from injuries due to lawn mower use. The study also showed that people over the age of 60 had the highest incidence of lawn mower injuries. The study further revealed that debris from under the mower striking a body part or entering the eye was the most common type of injury.

The study also explored the types of injuries that occurred to children under the age of fifteen who operated lawn mowers. These injuries included: projectiles, burns from hot surfaces and running over an object. For older adults, projectiles and falling on slippery surfaces were the most prominent injuries. In addition, resulting aches and pains from operating the lawn mower were another leading complaint from operators over the age of fifteen.

While there is no cited age limit for operating a lawn mower, Dr. David Bishai, M.D., Ph.D. with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, MD recommends that “nobody under age 15 has any business around a lawn mower.”

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) recommends the following safety tips for lawn mower operators:

- Use safety goggles to protect the eyes when mowing.
- Protective gloves should be worn when changing mower blades.
- Never mow in open toed shoes or without foot protection. Close toed, leather shoes with good gripped soles are the best foot protection. Also, be sure to wear pants to cover your legs when mowing.
- Do not allow others in the yard or area that you are mowing.
- Be aware of the physical stress that mowing the lawn can create on your body, especially if you have a history of pain onset by intense labor. Also be aware

of weather conditions. Do not mow in wet weather or in extreme heat. While mowing, keep your body hydrated with frequent water breaks.

- Do not mow wet grass. This increases your chances of slipping and falling.
- Do not service or fuel the mower while it is running.
- Keep children under the age of fifteen from riding and playing near lawn mowers.

-Information excerpted from “Lawn Mower Injuries on the Rise,” published by the American College of Emergency Physicians, www.acep.org.

Eye Protection

The most commonly used type of personal protective equipment is eye protection, or safety glasses. Depending on the hazard, safety glasses can also have side shields or eye cup shields. Goggles, face shields, and welding helmets are other types of commonly used eye protectors.



Both face shields and welding helmets are designed to be worn over safety glasses. These are designed to shield your face from airborne particulates like wood or metal shavings, molten metal, and liquid hazards.

Airborne particulates also pose the dangerous threat of striking your eyes by entering peripherally, or from the ear side of your head. In cases like this, your eye protection must have side safety shields as well. Clip-on or slide-on side shields are allowed as long as they meet the requirements of the OSHA standard. For example, if you're working on a wood lathe, the proper eye protection could be a pair of safety glasses with side protection, or goggles. But, if you're working with molten metal, you should wear goggles and a heat resistant face shield.

If you are required to wear prescription glasses, prescription safety glasses can be obtained. Please note that your employer is not required to pay for prescription safety glasses, as long as comparable over-the-glasses safety glasses are available. No matter which type of safety glasses you wear, scratched or heavily worn lenses are grounds for immediate replacement of the safety glasses, because wearing them can obstruct the user's vision and put other lives in jeopardy.

When storing your eye protection, it's imperative that it be placed in a safe, dry area when not in use.

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If there are any subjects you would like to see addressed in this newsletter, or questions about a topic presented, please contact Ms. Amanda Weller, Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc., Two Pierce Place, Itasca, IL 60143, Telephone: 815-236-5170, Email: Amanda_Weller@gbtpa.com.

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Using Extension Cords Safely

Extension cords are one of the most common electrical items found in today's buildings. From a safety standpoint, they are also one of the most misused. This often leads to shock, tripping accidents and electrical fires.

The safest way to use extension cords is not to use them at all. Avoid them whenever possible; and if they must be used, remember that they are approved only for temporary situations.

Extension Cords—Basic Hazards and Safety Measures

1. Avoid their use whenever possible. This is the best way to eliminate any problems.
2. They are designed for temporary situations only; not to provide permanent power. If additional wiring is required, have it installed.
3. Must be of adequate size to carry the load. If not, the insulation will break down from overheating, and eventually cause a short circuit and possibly a fire. Cord must be the same wire gauge or heavier

than the power cord to which it is attached.

4. Use only UL approved cords.
5. Inspect before using. Reject if warm, frayed or broken.
6. Never use a spliced or patched extension cord.
7. Never nail or staple cords to walls or ceilings. This can damage the insulation and cause a short circuit.
8. Never run cords under rugs or carpets. Walking over them can break down the insulation and result in a short circuit.
9. Never connect more than one appliance to a cord. Multi-connections can easily overload the wiring.

As a rule of thumb, extension cords in use should not be warm or hot to the touch. This would indicate either undersized wiring for the load or poor connections. If major repairs or changes are needed, contact a qualified electrician.

