OregonOSHA Health and Safety

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RESOURCE

Health and Safety RESOURCE | August 2011 |

Riding for Safety

Orchard develops program for ATV safety

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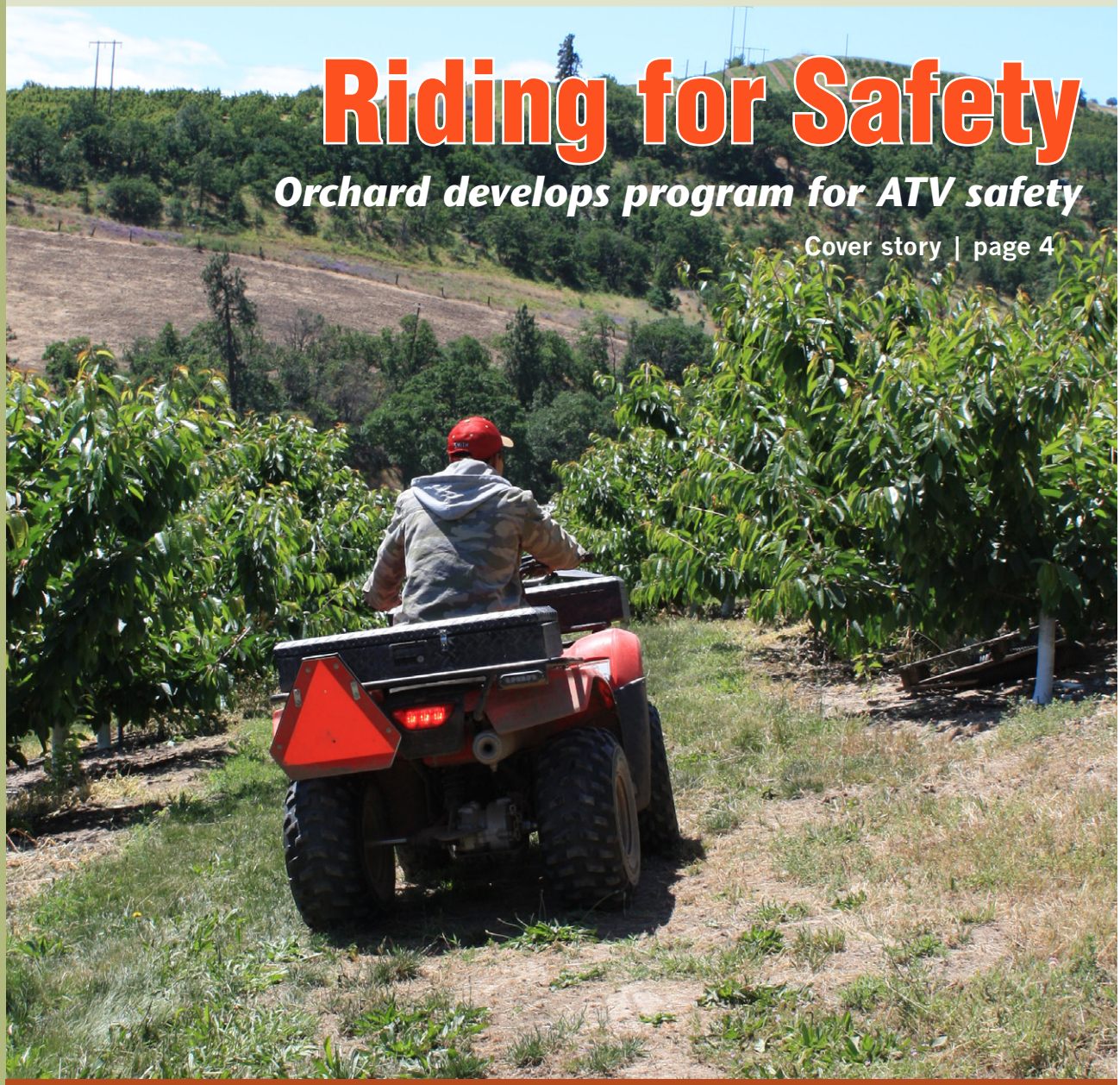

Inside:

Get a Grip
on Your Workplace Safety and Health

Central Oregon OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH Conference

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September 21 & 22, 2011

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This conference is a joint effort of the Central Oregon Safety & Health Association (COSHA) and Oregon OSHA.

RESOURCE

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On the cover: Ricardo Coyazo rides an ATV at Omeg Orchards in The Dalles.

Administrator's message:
Taking a firmer line against construction falls

By Michael Wood

As Albert Einstein suggested decades ago, one definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over, expecting to achieve different results. What looks like persistence in one context may simply be mindless repetition in another.

As I apply that principle to Oregon OSHA's efforts to improve construction safety – and particularly, residential construction safety – over the past decades, I don't mean to suggest that Oregon OSHA has not had an impact, or that the many efforts of government, contractors, and their workers have been wasted. But I do believe that our impact is not what it could have been, nor is it what we would like it to be.

As we have discussed several times in the Oregon OSHA Construction Advisory Committee over recent years, the simple reality is that the most frequent serious injuries and deaths in construction are the result of falls from height, just as they were 15 or 20 years ago. And the most frequent serious violations we cite in the construction industry relate to fall exposures, just as they did 15 or 20 years ago. In one sense, that's good – it means that we continue to focus our efforts on the greatest risk. In another sense, however, it's troubling. Why, after such focused attention on fall hazards in construction on the part of Oregon OSHA and many in the construction industry, is it still so easy to walk up to a residential construction site and find fall violations?

Anecdotally, there is certainly evidence suggesting that too many in the industry do not take the fear of either Oregon OSHA or the general contractor "catching" them in violation very seriously. The most frequent multiple repeat inspections involve falls. The basic fall requirements are not, as some other codes are, complex and difficult to understand. And most of our fall protection inspections result in a penalty reduction for immediate compliance. Why? Because the necessary fall protection equipment is sitting in the truck.

With that experience as a backdrop, it makes sense to take a look at how we do things to see whether we might be able to change our approach, at least to some degree, in the hope of having a greater impact – in the hope of achieving different results. As we have been evaluating our penalty approach over the past 18 to 24 months, one thing has continually jumped out at me and others, including many of our industry stakeholders: We have been conservative in our use of the "death" rating in calculating penalties for fall protection violations.

Michael Wood, Administrator

The existing penalty rule indicates that any penalty should be calculated using the most severe reasonably predictable outcome. But, in practice, we have rarely considered falls under 16 feet to be "death" violations, in spite of the large number of cases in Oregon and around the nation that prove such falls can indeed be fatal. We have taken steps to correct that practice, bringing it in line with the existing rule – in other words, we will be calculating penalties for almost all construction fall hazards by taking into account the very real risk of death.

This "course correction" is simply a technically correct application of our existing rules. But at heart, the issue is not simply a technical one. As always, the core of this adjustment is about real situations and real people. Just a few weeks ago, we had yet another fall on an Oregon construction job. The worker fell 13 feet. Our investigation is not yet complete, and we don't know all the details. But we do know one thing for certain. The worker died.

Riding for Safety

Orchard develops program for ATV safety

By Melanie Mesaros

Before Ricardo Coyazo fires up the Honda all-terrain vehicle (ATV) assigned to him at Omeg Orchards in The Dalles, he reaches for the oil stick, then checks tire pressure.

This April, he escaped serious injury when a tractor rut caught the tire of his ATV, sending it down a steep hill. The ATV rolled twice, throwing him off the vehicle and to the ground. The vehicle landed on Coyazo, pinning his legs. Two other workers nearby heard his screams and called for help. Coyazo was taken to the hospital and ended up with only scrapes and bruises.

Ricardo Coyazo is riding again after an ATV accident this spring.

Mike Omeg at his farm in The Dalles.

Speaking through in interpreter, he said, "I don't drive the same. I am more careful and much more scared in areas that are risky."

Mike Omeg, a fifth-generation cherry orchardist, said the accident was scary for him as an owner, too. He takes ATV safety seriously – so much so that he developed a written program for his workers. It includes a checklist of items that are inspected before operating, such as tire pressure, brakes, and headlights. Workers are also required to go through a training (held in Spanish) once a year.

Lights and reflectors help keep the ATVs visible in the orchards.

"We do something I haven't seen other farmers do," said Omeg. "If the ATV looks good and they start it up, we test the brakes to make sure they work. You don't want to get out and be on the road and have them not work. If they see anything wrong, they are to contact their foreman or a supervisor."

Crossing the main road is one of the more dangerous maneuvers workers on ATVs face.

Omeg primarily uses the smaller-sized ATVs on his farm because of the rollover risk. The Honda model pictured here weighs 429 pounds – significantly lighter than the "Rancher" Honda model used at many neighboring farms which is over 600 pounds.

"If you are going to have a rollover, we want to have a lightweight piece of equipment involved," said Omeg. "Our employees grumble at times that our four-wheelers are weak, but that's OK with me."

Omeg also has a strict policy that prohibits passengers from riding on the ATVs.

"I'm happier because I know what to do. I work better when there are policies."

– Ricardo Coyazo

"We are in really hilly country here," Omeg said. "One thing we talk about is how to distribute your weight. We don't allow passengers on our ATVs."

At Omeg Orchards, workers try to minimize exposure to highways by riding on pathways that parallel the road.

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Riding for Safety, *continued from page 5*

Excessive speed is another thing that isn't tolerated at Omeg Orchards. He uses GPS units on cell phones to track workers who may be working alone. The units also inform him if someone is speeding on an ATV.

"If you are kicking up a big cloud of dust, you are going way too fast," Omeg said.

Coyazo said he knows workers at other farms don't have to follow as many rules, but he likes the policies.

"I'm happier because I know what to do. I work better when there are policies."

Omeg hopes he never has to take an accident call again, but if he does, his program and training may still be making a difference.

"ATVs are one of the most widely used pieces of equipment and one of the most dangerous," Omeg said. "If someone asked, 'what's the biggest risk on your farm?' I would say ATVs, hands down." ■

Omeg developed a written policy for use of ATVs at his farm.

While not required by Oregon OSHA, it's a good idea to have a written policy if you operate ATVs on the job. Here are some key points included in the policy developed by Omeg Orchards:

- **ATV drivers are required to wear glasses**
- **Headlights stay on at all times**
- **When parking an ATV on a slope, vehicles should be put in reverse**
- **Horseplay will result in automatic termination**

Omeg Orchards' written program for ATVs is available online:

http://omegorchards.com/atv-english.pdf (English)

http://omegorchards.com/atv-spanish.pdf (Spanish)

Not to worry: OSHA's fall-protection directive doesn't apply in Oregon

Did you hear the news about a recent federal OSHA directive on fall protection that affected residential-construction contractors? Relax. It doesn't apply in Oregon.

Last December, federal OSHA issued a new directive (STD 03-11-002) that changed the rules for contractors who used "alternative methods" of fall protection, such as slide guards for roofing work. More recently, federal OSHA announced a three-month phase-in to allow residential construction employers to come into compliance with the new directive.

But the directive doesn't apply here because it's based on a rule – *1926.501(b)(13)* – that Oregon OSHA repealed in 2002. Oregon OSHA replaced that rule the same year with *437-003-1501, General Fall Protection*, which sets fall-protection requirements for workers who walk or work at heights of 10 feet or higher. Workers exposed to hazards that could cause them to fall 10 feet or more must be protected by a fall-protection system described in *1926.502, Fall-protection Systems Criteria and Practices*. Slide guards and warning line systems for roofing work have their own rules in Oregon OSHA's fall-protection requirements for the construction industry.

Using ATVs on the job

By Ellis Brasch

If you're one of the more than 150,000 people in Oregon who uses an ATV on public lands, chances are that you're using it for weekend recreation. But, with high gas prices and a still-sluggish economy, more ATVs are also finding their way into the workplace as a substitute for pickups and SUVs.

Under Oregon law, all vehicles intended for off-highway use are considered ATVs but that's where the similarity ends. The state separates them into three classes: *Class I* ("quads" and "three-wheelers"), *Class II* (Jeeps, sand rails, and similar off-road vehicles), and *Class III* (motorcycles).

Most ATVs used on the job are Class I types and – as you might expect – they're used primarily in the agricultural operations (including forestry and logging). About 45 percent of work-related injuries involving ATVs in Oregon happen in this sector. Accepted workers' compensation claims for such injuries have averaged about nine per year over the past six years – far fewer than the number of injuries reported by folks who use ATVs for recreation. Yet, it doesn't matter whether you're using an ATV for work or for play; the hazards are the same.

What are the hazards?

Paved roads. ATVs can be difficult to control on paved roads, even at slow speeds, and they're hazards for other motorists who pass them on highways. A leading cause of ATV accidents is riding on or crossing a paved road. You can operate a Class I ATV on a highway only if you're doing ranching, farming, or agricultural work and your ATV doesn't exceed 20 miles per hour, stays close to the right-hand side of the highway, has a lighted headlight, and displays a slow-moving vehicle emblem.

Excessive speed and rough terrain. Fast riding makes it difficult to react to rocks, logs, ditches, and other obstacles.

Steep slopes. ATVs are easy to overturn, especially on steep slopes. Inexperienced drivers tend to overestimate an ATV's stability on such terrain. Traversing slopes on three-wheelers is particularly dangerous. In 1987, manufacturers stopped producing three-wheelers because of legal battles among consumer groups, manufacturers, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission over safety issues.

Passengers. Most ATVs are not designed to carry passengers; an extra rider doesn't have a secure place to stand or sit and makes the vehicle unstable. There are no ATV-specific laws in Oregon prohibiting passengers; however, Oregon does have a motor vehicle law that says a passenger cannot be in the operator's lap or "embrace."

Do I need training?

If you use an ATV on private land or if you use it for work such as farming, agriculture, forestry, nursery, or Christmas tree growing, you're exempt from any Oregon-required training.

However, if you intend to use a *Class I* or *Class III* ATV on public land, you must first take the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's online ATV Safety Course by the following dates:

Your age	Date training required
30 and under	Jan. 1, 2010
40 and under	Jan. 1, 2011
50 and under	Jan. 1, 2012
60 and under	Jan. 1, 2013
All riders	Jan. 1, 2014

Using protective equipment

Essential protective equipment should include a motorcycle helmet with a fastened chinstrap, over-the-ankle boots, goggles or face shield, and off-road style gloves.

Riders under 18

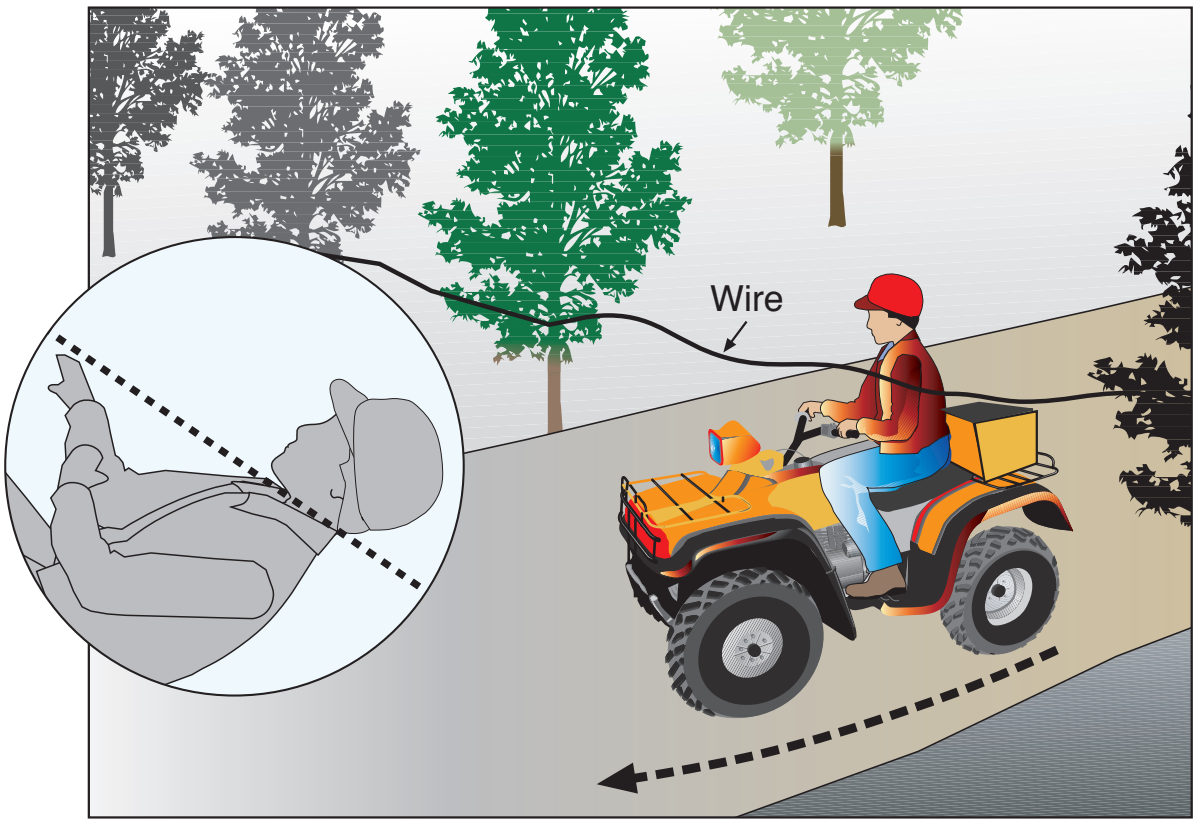
Anyone under the age of 18 who rides an ATV on public lands must wear a DOT (or Snell) approved motorcycle helmet with the chinstrap fastened. This requirement doesn't apply if the ATV is:

- Used exclusively in farming, agricultural, or forestry operations or used by people licensed under ORS chapter 571 exclusively for nursery or Christmas-tree growing operations
- Being used on land owned or leased by the owner of the vehicle
- A street-legal *Class II* vehicle registered in Oregon

Where to get more information about ATVs

- ORS Chapter 821: Off-Road Vehicles; Snowmobiles; All-Terrain Vehicles
- OAR 735-116-0000: Safety Equipment Standards for Off-Road Vehicles
- ORS Chapter 571: Nursery Stock; Licensed Crop and Christmas Tree Growers, Handlers and Dealers
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department: All-Terrain Vehicle program
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department: The Oregon Online ATV Safety Education Course
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: Hazards Associated with ATVs in the Workplace
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: ATVSafety.gov

Case Report
Incident type | Laceration
Industry | Agriculture
Employee | Laborer



The victim, who was employed at a fruit tree farm, was using an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) to do various tasks in one of the farm's orchards.

He was riding the ATV between rows of trees in the orchard, traveling at a moderate speed. He saw his supervisor not far away and cut across two rows of trees to talk to him. After a brief discussion about work issues, he got back on the ATV and rode west toward the end of the orchard, following another row of trees. Just as he was leaving the orchard, he struck a 3/8-inch wire cable, which was strung across three rows of trees. The impact lacerated his throat, broke his neck, and knocked him off the vehicle.

Witnesses, who heard a loud noise, ran toward the sound and found him lying on the ground. The ATV was a few yards away. The supervisor, who lived nearby, ran to his house and told his wife to call 911. He returned to the scene and, with the others, tried to stop the flow of blood from the victim's neck with a towel. EMTs arrived a few minutes later began advanced life-support procedures. He was taken to a local hospital where he died from brain anoxia caused by the laceration and disruption of blood flow to the brain.

Investigation findings

The employer had strung the wire cable to prevent vehicles from entering the north end of the orchard. The cable had two strips of colored ribbon tied to it on the section between the second and third rows of trees, but the section between the first and second rows was not marked.

The employer occasionally removed the cable to allow farm equipment in for harvesting, spraying, and other orchard tasks. The diameter of the cable and the victim's direction of travel (westward, with the sun in his eyes) made the cable impossible to see.

The employer was cited for erecting a cable across a travel route without adequate marking or signage or maintaining the cable in a clearly visible manner.

Items cited:

- ORS 654.010, Employers to furnish safe place of employment.

Blue Mountain Conference held in Pendleton

The fifth annual Blue Mountain Conference in Pendleton, held June 15, attracted nearly 200 attendees.

Keynote speaker Todd Conklin presented "Preventing the Human Error: What's Stopping Us!" – a look at what's behind human performance and why the perception of human error needs to change.

His overall message addressed the importance of looking at workplace safety and health as a system, not as an individual, stand-alone piece.

Todd Conklin was the keynote speaker at the Blue Mountain Conference.

Duane Grange of SelecTemp was the recipient of this year's Blue Star Award, which has been given out the past three years at the conference. It honors an individual for safety leadership and commitment.

Workers' Memorial Scholarships awarded for 2011

Oregon OSHA is honoring seven Oregon students with Workers' Memorial Scholarship awards for the 2011-2012 academic year. For children, losing a parent or having a parent suffer a debilitating injury can significantly affect their ability to pursue dreams through higher education.

Oregon OSHA is pleased to honor the following recipients:

Matthew Cecil, Hermiston

Cecil is pursuing a career in business management at Northwest University in Kirkland, Wash., after graduating from Hermiston High School this year.

Cecil was in middle school when his father was killed on the job. He is receiving a $1,000 award.

Brittany Ford, Gresham

Ford attends Oregon State University and is studying to become a registered dietician and participates in cross country.

A 2009 graduate of Gresham Barlow High School, Ford lost her father when a machine crushed him two weeks after her seventh birthday. This is Ford's third Workers' Memorial Scholarship. She is receiving $1,000.

William McLaughlin, Yamhill

McLaughlin plans to attend Oregon State University this fall to study education. He is a 2010 graduate of Yamhill-Carlton High School.

McLaughlin's father died in a construction accident when he was two years old. He is receiving a $1,000 award.

Brittany Ford receives her award from Michael Wood, administrator of Oregon OSHA (left) and Scott L. Harra, acting director of DCBS.

William McLaughlin talks about his education plans at Oregon State University.

The 2011 scholarship recipients (left to right) Marissa Parr, Brittany Ford, William McLaughlin, and Zachary Prinz (not pictured Matthew Cecil and Andrea Webb).

Marissa Parr, Jefferson

A 2011 graduate of Jefferson High School, Parr is pursuing a pre-law degree at Willamette University.

Her father is wheelchair bound after a workplace accident that occurred in 1991. She is receiving a $1,000 award.

Zachary Prinz, West Linn

With hopes of working in the sports industry, Prinz is attending Bard College in Miami this fall to pursue a business degree.

Prinz was six years old when his father was killed in a plane crash. He is a 2011 graduate of West Linn High School and is receiving a $250 award.

Andrea Webb, Eugene

Webb is attending Lane Community College this fall and plans to study nursing. She is also a working mom.

Webb's father died shortly before her second birthday after a workplace accident. She is receiving a $1,000 award.

Marissa Parr and her father Randall, who injured his back in a trucking accident in 1991.

(The seventh award winner wants to remain anonymous.)

Award recommendations are made by Oregon OSHA's Safe Employment Education and Training Advisory Committee, an advisory group with members from business, organized labor, and government. Oregon OSHA presents the awards annually to help in the postsecondary education of spouses or children of permanently and totally disabled or fatally injured workers. The 1991 Legislature established the Workers' Memorial Scholarship at the request of the Oregon AFL-CIO, with support from Associated Oregon Industries.

The Workers' Memorial Scholarship is open to any high school graduate, graduating high school senior, GED recipient, or current college undergraduate or graduate student who is a dependent or spouse of an Oregon worker who has been fatally injured or permanently disabled while on the job.

Workers face increased risks while working in heat

Workers who perform outdoor jobs risk being more than just uncomfortable – the work can also lead to serious illness or even death.

Employers and workers should be familiar with some of the common signs of heat exhaustion. A person overcome with heat exhaustion will still sweat but may experience extreme fatigue, nausea, lightheadedness, or a headache. The person could have clammy and moist skin, a pale complexion, and a normal or only slightly elevated body temperature. If heat exhaustion is not treated promptly, the illness could progress to heat stroke and possibly even death.

"Because we see so many cloudy, rainy days in Oregon, we often forget that too much sun and heat can be dangerous," said Penny Wolf-McCormick, an Oregon OSHA health enforcement manager. "Workers often aren't acclimated and we handle cases every summer that involve heat exhaustion or heat stress."

Workers on construction sites may be at greater risk for heat illness due to heavy exertion, enclosed operator cabs with poor air circulation, and prolonged exposure to the sun.

Heat stroke is a different condition than heat exhaustion. There are several reactions that occur in the human body with heat stroke: hot, red skin (looks like sunburn); mood changes; irritability and confusion; and collapsing (person will not respond to verbal commands). Call for emergency help immediately if you think a person is suffering from heat stroke. If not treated quickly, the condition can result in death.

Oregon OSHA has a new pocket-sized booklet available, in both English and Spanish, with tips for those working in the heat: http://www.orosha.org/pdf/pubs/3422.pdf (English version)

Employers can also download posters, in both English and Spanish, from Oregon OSHA's website: http://www.orosha.org/pdf/pubs/4926Pe.pdf (English version)

Dede Montgomery awarded ASSE's "Safety Professional of the Year"

Dede Montgomery, an industrial hygienist with the Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology (CROET) at Oregon Health and Science University, was named the 2011 Safety Professional of the Year by the Columbia Willamette Chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers.


Dede Montgomery

Montgomery worked closely with Oregon OSHA on last fall's investigation into hair smoothing products, after hearing from several Portland stylists experiencing symptoms consistent with formaldehyde exposure. She brought the information to the attention of Oregon OSHA, and later testing of "Keratin-based" hair smoothers showed significant levels of formaldehyde, despite some being labeled "formaldehyde free."

"Dede has consistently been an outstanding partner for Oregon OSHA," said Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood. "She is a regular attendee at our Construction Advisory Committee meetings and her work on issues facing young workers has been exceptional. The ASSE award reflects an excellent record of service to Oregon workers and their employers."

Montgomery supports education and outreach at CROET, along with being the co-chair of the Oregon Young Employee Safety Coalition (O[yes]), a nonprofit organization that works to educate young workers and employers about safety on the job. She also represents CROET as a member of the Oregon Collaborative for Healthy Nail Salons.

Before joining CROET in 2004, she was a consultant with a Portland industrial hygiene and training consulting firm and served as the regional health and safety manager for EPA Region 10 in Seattle.

Congratulations to these new VPP companies:

- **BlueLinx Corporation, Beaverton**
- **The Coca-Cola Company, Portland**
- **Pacific Klamath Energy, Klamath Falls**
- **Portland General Electric – Coyote Springs facility, Boardman**

Boiler maintenance is key to protecting employees

In light of a recent incident at a local elementary school, the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services Building Codes Division (BCD) is reminding organizations with boilers to take regular steps to make sure their boilers are operating properly.

"Overheated boilers can explode, causing serious injuries to employees and damage to buildings," said Patrick Allen, acting administrator of the Building Codes Division. "We want to remind school districts and other organizations to perform regular maintenance on their boilers, address problems immediately, and make sure only qualified personnel work on them."

BCD recently proposed civil penalties against North Clackamas School District and Boise-based Clima-Tech Corporation related to an unsafe boiler at Lot Whitcomb Elementary School. The boiler controls were tied into an energy management system installed by Clima-Tech Corporation. The BCD investigation found that the system was wired incorrectly, which caused the boiler's safety controls to be inoperable.

The Building Codes Division encourages school districts and other organizations with boilers in their facilities to take the following precautions:

- Make sure that inspection and maintenance schedules are in place and adhered to.
- Ensure that trained individuals are regularly checking all boiler gages, monitors, and equipment settings.
- Ensure that an up-to-date maintenance log is kept in the room with the boiler.
- Post contact numbers for the person or company responsible for maintaining the boiler, so that people with questions know who to contact.
- If a boiler is emitting steam or smoke, evacuate the building immediately and call 911.

Organizations also should be aware that energy management systems might affect the safety of their boiler, the division added.

"Energy management systems are growing in popularity and can help achieve energy efficiency and cost savings; however, organizations must make sure these systems do not interfere with the safe operation of boilers and other equipment," Allen said.

The Building Codes Division inspects and issues permits for both boilers and pressure vessels. For more information, go to www.cbs.state.or.us/bcd/programs/boiler.html.

Ask Technical:

Electrical cord inspections

Q: *It used to be an OSHA requirement for construction firms to have an annual electrical cord inspection. I've heard that requirement changed. Are annual electrical cord inspections still an OSHA requirement?*

A: *About eight years ago, Oregon OSHA started requiring construction employers to protect their employees with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) when they used the typical electrical voltages (nominal 125) and amperages (usually 30 and less).*

Before that, Oregon OSHA allowed the option of GFCIs or an assured equipment grounding program. The grounding program is still an option for larger voltage and amperage systems, such as 240/480, 50 amp receptacles. When employers choose the grounding program, they are required to do a visual inspection of extension cords before each day's use. Currently, under 1926.403 General Requirements [Subdivision 3/K], employers are required to ensure that electrical equipment does not have recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees.

Going the distance

Meet a leading Oregon health and safety professional

Company: Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District, Beaverton

Safety Coordinator: Nick Koch

Workforce: Year-round full-time employees – 200
Part-time employees – 500 to 800, depending on the season

Common Hazards: Slips and falls, lifting, pushing/pulling injuries, use of personal protective equipment.

What is your background and safety philosophy?

After trying my hand as a logger, commercial fisherman, and television news videographer, I landed in the safety department at the U.S. Naval Air Station in Whidbey Island, Wash. I received the same training and certifications there as a federal OSHA safety specialist. During my 12 years at NAS, I served as a confined space program manager, respirator program manager, lead facility inspector, hazmat program manager, and radiation safety officer. My last position there was recreation, athletic, and home safety officer, which helped me land my current job. My initial safety training was received through the Naval Safety Training Center, governed by the Navy Occupational Safety and Health Department (NAVOSH) and OSHA. These certification courses are some of the most rigorous in the nation, averaging two weeks in length and requiring a score of 90 percent or greater to pass.

You might think my safety philosophy is focused on my technical training and certifications. However,

Koch's staff is responsible for maintaining diverse spaces – from tennis courts to baseball fields, trails to senior centers.

it's really much simpler than that. My first supervisor advised me that being successful in the field of safety requires a "people person," not a technician. For optimal compliance with safety programs and procedures, employees must view the safety officer as an ally, not an enforcer. At THPRD, with a work force that comes primarily from recreational and competitive sports backgrounds, emphasizing and creating a team environment has proven very effective. We've formed safety committees and empowered employees at each facility to take an active role in identifying and solving safety issues.

What are the unique safety challenges you are facing on current projects?

THPRD is not a stand-alone facility. The district encompasses 50 square miles with eight swimming pools, six recreation centers (one of them a senior center), 1,300 acres of natural areas, 60 miles of trails, and multiple waterways. Because our patrons have access to almost every space our employees occupy, the safety office has to expand its reach from occupational safety to personal safety on a regular basis. For instance, we currently have six major construction projects going on throughout the park district. It is quite a challenge to ensure the construction work does not present a hazard to our employees or anyone visiting one of our parks or facilities.

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Whitaker (left) discusses a park drainage issue with Koch.

Koch (right) stops to talk with employee Roger Whitaker, who is spreading bark dust on a trail in the Raleigh Hills neighborhood.

Going the Distance,
continued from page 19

Koch talks with lifeguard Kevin Sepulueda, one of the park district's many seasonal employees.

How do you keep seasonal staff trained and up to date on your safety programs?

A lot of our seasonal staff have returned to work, so that's a big advantage. Many are college students and come to work for us right when they get out for the summer. Some have worked for us three and four years in a row. Supervisors will offer training for the incoming group.

From lifeguards to soccer coaches, our managers do hazard assessments before the seasonal workers begin. Each department has its own training program. For instance, our Natural Resources Department has employees working in more natural areas. Exposure to poison oak is more common and therefore covered in the department's initial orientation.

The summer season is likely your busiest time. Does that present any new hazards or issues for workers?

Busy is an understatement! Our park district maintains, on average, about 700 employees most of the year, but in the summer, that number increases to about 1,000. Of course, summer brings increased concerns regarding poison oak exposures, sunburn, and dehydration, but one of the more interesting aspects of an increased work force and increased public usage is the exposure of employees to blood-borne pathogens and everyday issues regarding immunology. We ask our patrons to keep sick or contagious children home, but that doesn't always happen. Last summer, one of our employees broke out with an exotic skin rash (which originated in Africa) due to an exposure from a child with an active infection.

Koch points out one of the biggest hazards in the park district – a locked door secures a chlorine room at an outdoor pool.

Fleet technician Allan Stetson (left) works on a truck in the shop, where maintenance on the district's fleet of 250 vehicles, mowers, and other landscape equipment is done.

What advice do you have for other safety and health managers hoping to make a difference?

I would recommend taking advantage of Oregon OSHA's Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP). When Keith Hobson, THPRD's director of business and facilities, directed me and my supervisor, Mark Hokkanen, to investigate SHARP, we realized right away it wouldn't hurt our current program. Upon meeting with our Oregon OSHA representative, we further realized that SHARP would undoubtedly help us, whether or not we achieved SHARP certification. Our consultant worked tirelessly with us, reviewing and refining programs. This year, THPRD earned its SHARP designation for our main recreation complex, which spans 92 acres and several athletic facilities, as well as our administration and maintenance headquarters. We became the first park district in the state (and possibly the nation) to do so, and our employees and patrons are safer for it. Taking part in SHARP will increase any organization's knowledge of safety rules and regulations, provide additional resources for achieving its safety goals, and provide a professional review of its safety programs. In my opinion, it is a program that cannot be beat. ■

Koch in the district's tool shop.