Health and Safety

RESOURCE

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Resource

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Education:

Workshop classes will be held virtually until further notice.

A minimum of five registrants is needed to hold a virtual workshop.

Registered participants will receive an email if a cancellation is necessary.

Register and attend

Using the secure online registration portal, you can find classes. The workshop schedule changes every three months.

For more information, visit the classroom workshops page.

Find more information about education resources by visiting Oregon OSHA's education and training page.

To receive conference registration materials, exhibitor information, or sponsorship information, contact the Conference Section:
oregon.conferences@oregon.gov | **503-947-7411** | osha.oregon.gov/conferences

Due to the effects of COVID-19, Oregon OSHA and its conference partners have made changes to the event schedule. Mark your calendar for these workplace safety and health conferences:

Central Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Conference
Sept. 27 & 28, 2021 • Bend

Southern Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Conference
Oct. 19-21, 2021 • Virtual event

Western Pulp, Paper, and Forest Products Safety & Health Conference
Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2021 • Portland

Mid-Oregon Construction Safety Summit
Jan. 24 & 25, 2022 • Bend

Northwest Safety & Health Summit by Region X VPPPA
May 10-12, 2022 • Boise, Idaho

Blue Mountain Occupational Safety & Health Conference
June 6 & 7, 2022 • Pendleton

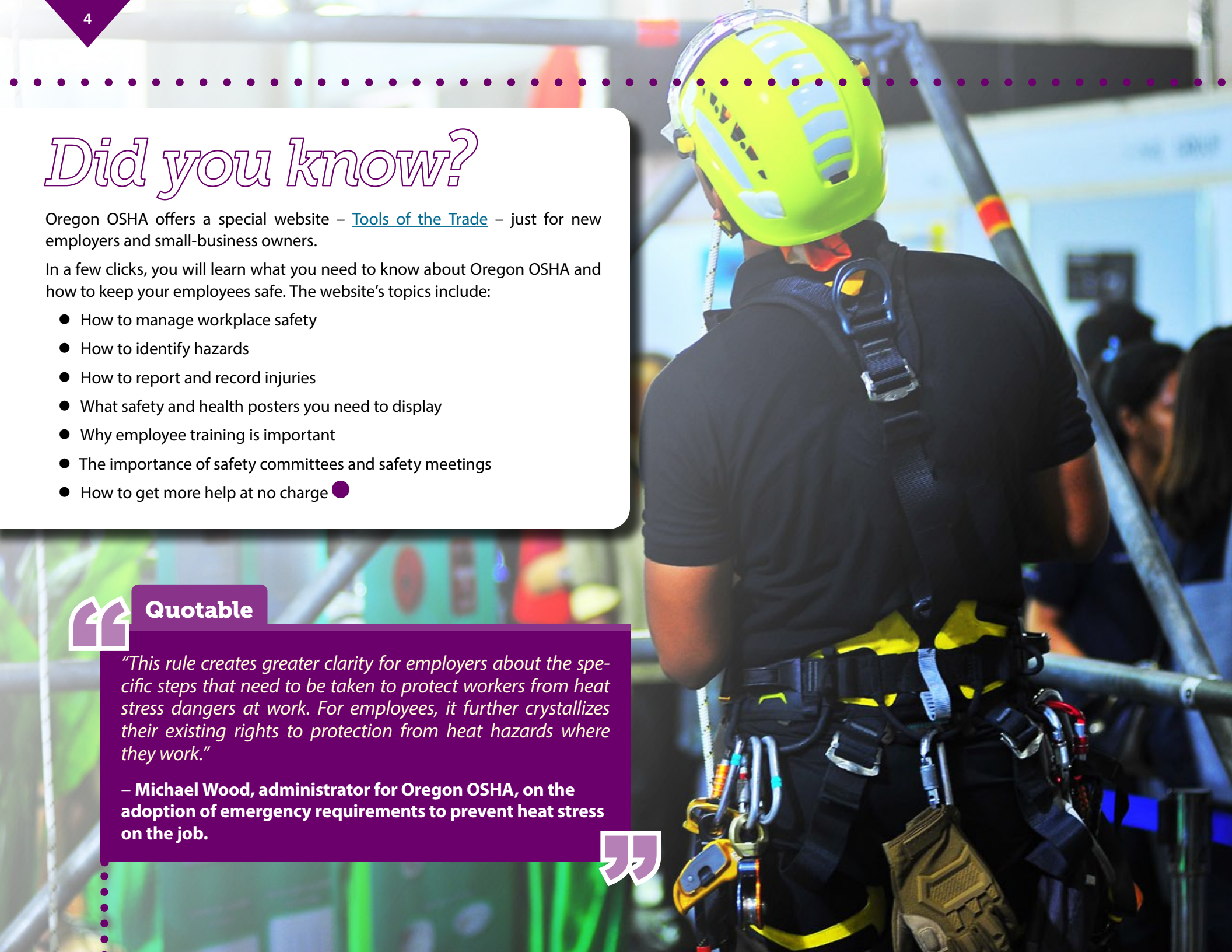
Oregon GOSH Conference
March 6-9, 2023 • Portland

Did you know?

Oregon OSHA offers a special website – Tools of the Trade – just for new employers and small-business owners.

In a few clicks, you will learn what you need to know about Oregon OSHA and how to keep your employees safe. The website's topics include:

- How to manage workplace safety
- How to identify hazards
- How to report and record injuries
- What safety and health posters you need to display
- Why employee training is important
- The importance of safety committees and safety meetings
- How to get more help at no charge



Quotable

"This rule creates greater clarity for employers about the specific steps that need to be taken to protect workers from heat stress dangers at work. For employees, it further crystallizes their existing rights to protection from heat hazards where they work."

– Michael Wood, administrator for Oregon OSHA, on the adoption of emergency requirements to prevent heat stress on the job.

Datapoints

Workplace fatalities as initially reported to Oregon OSHA – 2020

Deaths from "natural causes" accounted for about 40 percent of the 89 workplace fatalities reported to Oregon OSHA in 2020 – more than any other single cause of a workplace fatality.

These initial fatality reports give a broader – though unofficial – picture of how workers die when they are at work. What distinguishes this data from the official data is the percentage of deaths from "natural causes" – apparent medical conditions such as heart attack and stroke.

Oregon OSHA reminds employers that they must report the death of any employee within eight hours of when it happened.

(Data chart on Page 8.)

Workplace fatalities by month and type of incident - 2020

Incident	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
ATV rollover			1									
Carbon monoxide poisoning				1								
Caught between; crushed					1							
Crushed	1	1					2	2		1		
Cut by; fall											1	
Drowned					1		1	1				
Electrocution							1					
Fall			1			1		4				1
Fall; suicide											1	
Fire							1					
Heat stress							1					
Homicide			1	1								1
Illness							1	1				
Infection										2	2	
MVA	2				1			1			2	
MVA (Helicopter)								1				
Natural causes	**4**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**4**	**3**	**3**
Struck against								1		1		
Struck by	2	1		1					1	1	1	
Traumatic head injury												1
Unknown								1			1	
Total (89)	**9**	**3**	**7**	**4**	**6**	**6**	**9**	**15**	**4**	**9**	**11**	**6**

Source: DCBS Information Technology and Research Section.

What you should know about trench cave-ins

By Ellis Brasch

Trench cave-ins that kill or seriously injure workers have become rare events in Oregon. The last fatality happened in 2016 when a 29-year-old pipe layer was buried under six feet of dirt while he was working in an improperly shored trench. In 2018, three Oregon workers were injured – one critically – in two separate incidents involving trenches that lacked protective systems.

Of course, it's good news that trench cave-ins have killed no Oregon workers in five years. But the risk factors that caused those cave-ins in 2016 and 2018 have not gone away, and compliance officers continue to see them at worksites. Key factors in all three incidents included the failure of a competent person to inspect the trench daily and ensure that it was safe to enter, as well as the employee's failure to recognize the dangers of entering an unprotected trench. So it's always worthwhile to remember how excavation cave-ins happen and what can be done to prevent them.

What causes a cave-in?

Trench cave-ins can trap victims within seconds and kill them within minutes. A

cave-in that contains three to five cubic yards of soil weighs 8,000 to 14,000 pounds, and a victim can suffocate in less than three minutes. If the victim survives, the weight of the soil is likely to cause serious internal injuries.

Undisturbed soil stays in place because of the soil's opposing horizontal and vertical forces. When you create an excavation, such as a trench, you remove a section of soil that previously provided the horizontal support. The remaining soil located behind the face of an excavation will eventually move downward, into the excavation. The longer the face remains unsupported, the more likely it is to cave in. Sometimes, this downward movement occurs gradually, creating an inconvenient mess; however, all too often, the downward movement occurs instantly and without warning.

The importance of the competent person

Because trench cave-ins are so dangerous, Oregon OSHA's minimum safety rules require employers to designate persons to perform a variety of ongoing tasks to ensure that excavations remain safe. Those tasks are assigned to a "competent person," who must be trained to identify existing and predictable hazards in excavations and must have the authority to take prompt measures to eliminate them. (See, "What responsibilities does a competent person have in overseeing work in an excavation?" Ask Oregon OSHA, Page 19).

The competent person's expertise must be backed up by training in soil analysis, trench protection methods, and Oregon OSHA's excavation requirements. The competent person must also have the authority – designated by the employer – to immediately correct trench-related hazards and to order employees to leave the trench until the hazards have been corrected. An employee who is trained and can identify trench-related hazards, but doesn't have the authority to correct them, is not a competent person. A competent person's responsibilities can be shared by more than one competent person at a site as long as each person understands their respective roles in keeping the trench safe.

Know the ABCs of trench stability

Because soil and rock characteristics affect the stability of a trench, a competent person must conduct visual and manual tests to determine the type of the soil at the site. There are three basic types of soil that affect the stability of a trench:

- **Type A:** very stable. Clay is an example.
- **Type B:** less stable than Type A soil. Crushed rock, silt, and soils that contain an equal mixture of sand and silt are examples.
- **Type C:** less stable than Type B soil. Gravel and sand are examples.

The importance of protective systems: sloping, benching, shoring, and shielding

The basic methods for protecting workers from cave-ins are sloping, benching, shoring, and shielding. The appropriate method depends on factors such as soil type and water content, the trench depth and width, the nature of the work, and nearby activities that could increase the risk of a cave-in. The competent person has the responsibility for considering these factors and for determining the appropriate protective system.

There is a common misconception that protective systems are not required if a trench has a depth less than four feet; however, a protective system is required unless a competent person in excavation safety determines through an examination of the ground that the excavation shows no indication of a potential cave-in. Such indications include tension cracks, water accumulation, budging, sluffing, heaving, squeezing, or subsidence.

Getting in and out of a trench

A trench that has a depth of four feet or more must have a stairway, ladder, or ramp that is within 25 feet of workers; if conditions in a trench become hazardous, workers' safety may depend on how quickly they can climb out. A competent person must design any structural ramps that are used to enter and exit the trench. Structural ramps used in place of steps must have a nonslip surface. A competent person must also evaluate compressed earth access ramps that workers use to enter and exit the trench.

Keeping spoils away from the trench

Excavated soil, called spoils, can cause a cave-in when piled too close to the edge of a trench. So can heavy equipment. Keep spoils and equipment at least two feet away from the edge of the trench. When possible, use vertical shores or shields that extend above the top of the trench to restrain spoils. When it's not possible to meet the two-foot setback, move spoils and equipment to another location.

The danger of water accumulation

Water makes soil unstable. Workers can't enter trenches when water has built up, unless they are protected from the increased risk of a cave-in. Protection includes specialized support systems and water removal equipment. A competent person must inspect the trench and monitor methods used to control water accumulation.

Using fuel-powered tools in excavations and other enclosed spaces – *Tips for protecting your employees*

By Ellis Brasch

Although carbon monoxide's reputation as a silent killer is well known, it continues to find unsuspecting victims.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless poisonous gas produced by the incomplete burning of any material containing carbon – gasoline, natural gas, oil, propane, coal, or wood. It is harmful because it displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the heart, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen. It is one of the leading causes of poisoning by inhalation and is a common workplace hazard.

Mild exposure to carbon monoxide can cause nausea, dizziness, or headache. Prolonged or high exposure may worsen symptoms and include vomiting, confusion, collapse, loss of consciousness, and muscle weakness. Symptoms vary from person to person. Severe exposure can result in permanent brain and heart damage or death.

Know the risks

Your risk of becoming a carbon monoxide victim

Overexposure to carbon monoxide is a risk whenever employees use fuel-powered tools – such as this gas-powered compactor – in an excavation. A competent person must test the excavation for any potential hazardous atmosphere before an employee can enter. (Photo credit: Owen Silver)

depends on a number of factors, including the concentration of carbon monoxide in the air, how long you are exposed, and your exertion level. Oregon OSHA doesn't allow an employee to be exposed to carbon monoxide more than 50 parts per million averaged over an eight-hour period – called the *permissible exposure limit* (PEL).

However, other safety and health organizations have established guidelines at lower exposure levels. For example, the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) has assigned carbon monoxide a threshold limit value or "TLV" of 25 ppm for an eight-hour workday; and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has established a *recommended exposure limit* (REL) for carbon monoxide of 35 parts per million.

Those numbers aren't likely to help you, however, unless you have access to personal air monitoring equipment. If you are using gas-powered equipment, play it safe and stay away from poorly ventilated areas – even in places you might consider safe.

Using fuel-powered tools in excavations

Overexposure to carbon monoxide is a risk when employees use fuel-powered tools, such as gas-powered compactors and water pumps, in excavations – the deeper the excavation, the greater the risk of overexposure. A competent person should test for carbon monoxide whenever fuel-powered tools are used in an excavation.

In fact, a competent person must be on site to test an excavation for any potential hazardous atmosphere or an oxygen deficiency (atmospheres containing less than 19.5 percent oxygen). These conditions can occur in excavations near landfills, excavations contaminated by leaking gas lines, or in sewers and in other confined spaces.

Tips for staying safe

- Survey your workplace to identify potential sources of CO exposure.
- Educate employees about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and the symptoms and control of CO.
- Know the sources of carbon monoxide poisoning: Gasoline, natural gas, oil, propane, coal, and wood all produce carbon monoxide.
- Know the symptoms and signs of CO overexposure: Headache, nausea, weakness, dizziness, visual disturbances, changes in personality, and loss of consciousness. Any of these symptoms and signs can occur within minutes of exposure.
- Keep internal-combustion equipment in good operating condition.
- Prohibit the use of fuel-powered tools and engines in poorly ventilated areas. Do not use or operate fuel-powered engines or tools inside buildings or in partially enclosed areas unless gasoline engines can be located outside and away from air intakes.
- Test the air regularly in poorly ventilated areas and use mechanical ventilation when possible to keep carbon monoxide exposures below unsafe levels.
- Use personal CO monitors where potential sources of CO exist. These monitors should be equipped with audible alarms to warn workers when CO concentrations are too high.
- Substitute less hazardous equipment if possible. Use equipment that allows for the placement of gasoline-powered engines outdoors at a safe distance from air entering the building. Consider converting from gasoline-powered equipment to equipment powered by electricity or batteries when possible.

Carbon monoxide and other hazardous atmospheres in excavations – What construction rules apply?

- 1926.651(g)(1)(i), *Hazardous atmospheres, testing and controls:* Where oxygen deficiency (atmospheres containing less than 19.5 percent oxygen) or a hazardous atmosphere in an excavation greater than 4 feet deep could exist, the atmosphere in an excavation must be tested.
- 1926.651(k)(1), *Inspections:* A competent person must make daily inspections of excavations, adjacent areas, and protective systems for evidence of a situation that could result in possible cave-ins, indications of failure of protective systems, hazardous atmospheres, or other hazardous conditions.

You have questions about changes to Oregon OSHA's COVID-19 rules. *We have answers.*

By Aaron Corvin

On June 30, Oregon OSHA removed the facial covering and physical distancing requirements of its COVID-19 rule for all workplaces, with certain exceptions including health care, public transit, and airports.

The changes are consistent with previous public announcements about the reopening of Oregon, including by Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Health Authority.

Meanwhile, Oregon OSHA issued a July 19 advisory memo outlining the most current guidance about changes to its COVID-19 rule and about its enforcement stance regarding certain rule provisions. In addition to no longer enforcing the facial covering and distancing elements of the rule, for example, Oregon OSHA is no longer enforcing the rule's sanitation provision, according to the memo.

What does it all mean? For starters, it is worth focusing on what it does not mean. The fact that Oregon OSHA lifted – and no longer enforces – the basic facial covering and distancing parts of its requirements does *not* mean that the risks of COVID-19 are gone.

Some parts of the rule remain in place. They include optimization of ventilation, notification of a positive case in the workplace, and proper steps to take if an employee must quarantine.

"The risks of COVID-19 remain real, especially for those who are not fully vaccinated," said Michael Wood, administrator for Oregon OSHA. "That is why, from a risk management

standpoint, it makes sense to keep some provisions of our workplace requirements in place longer."

Wood added, "We need to remain vigilant and encourage more people to get vaccinated."

To better understand the changes to Oregon OSHA's rule, the division offers the following questions and answers:

Does the new public health guidance mean that Oregon OSHA's rules for COVID-19 are being rescinded?

A: No, but the Oregon OSHA rule has been modified accordingly to match Oregon's new statewide public health guidance. The provisions that have changed apply only to face coverings and physical distancing, as well as the COVID-19 Hazard poster requirement. Although those are the most visible requirements, the rule includes other protective provisions, such as infection control, cleaning, notification of exposure, and ventilation, plus individual screening and triage in health care facilities. Those remain in place at present.

Is there an official statement from Oregon OSHA regarding these changes?

A: Yes, you can find an official statement from Oregon OSHA on our website at https://osha.oregon.gov/news/2021/Pages/nr2021-25.aspx

Can businesses still require face coverings?

A: Businesses can still choose to put their own protective provisions in place, such as face coverings, as long as those provisions are consistent with public health guidelines.

Which types of businesses still need to enforce face coverings and social distancing?

A: Establishments engaged in health care, public transit, and airports must still enforce face coverings and physical distancing.

Does the physical distancing and face covering change apply to all health care establishments?

A: Yes, at the present time facial coverings and physical distancing are required in all health care establishments (including dental offices and those engaged in noninvasive medical procedures). This also applies to patient reception areas, lobbies, and waiting areas.

How is "health care employer" defined?

A: Health care employers are those that operate workplaces where employees perform one or any combination of the following job duties:

A. Direct patient care

B. Environmental decontamination services in a healthcare setting

C. Aerosol-generating healthcare or postmortem procedures (AGPs)

D. Direct client service in residential care or assisted living facilities

E. Emergency first responder activities

F. Personal care activities that involve very close contact with an individual, such as toileting or bathing; or

G. Handling, packaging, cleaning, processing, or transporting human remains or human tissue specimens or laboratory cultures collected from an individual known or suspected to be infected with COVID-19. For more information on health care employers and workplaces at exceptional risk, you can go to at exceptional risk, you can go to https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHARules/div1/437-001-0744.pdf

Do workers in areas of the health care establishment *where patients DO NOT GO or where those exceptional risk job duties listed above are NOT PERFORMED,* need to adhere to the same face covering and physical distancing requirements as those health care workers involved in direct patient care, AGPs, or other exceptional risk job duties?

A: No. As long as the involved employees are not engaged in an exceptional risk job duty and do not have direct or indirect exposure to patients, then those workers do not need to adhere to the physical distancing and face covering requirements.

How do the new federal OSHA rules apply to health care providers in Oregon?

A: Oregon OSHA's rule still applies and takes precedence over the federal OSHA standard for those employers that are already subject to Oregon OSHA's jurisdiction. An employer already covered by Oregon OSHA's rule does NOT need to also follow the federal OSHA rule.

Can COVID-19 vaccine verification be used to reduce physical distancing or face covering use in health care establishments, public transit, or airports?

A: No.

Preventing heat illness for workers: Complying with Oregon OSHA's emergency rule

By Aaron Corvin

Oregon OSHA has adopted an emergency rule that strengthens requirements for employers to protect workers from the dangers of high and extreme heat. The requirements expand access to shade and cool water. They also include regular cool-down breaks, training, communication, emergency planning and other measures.

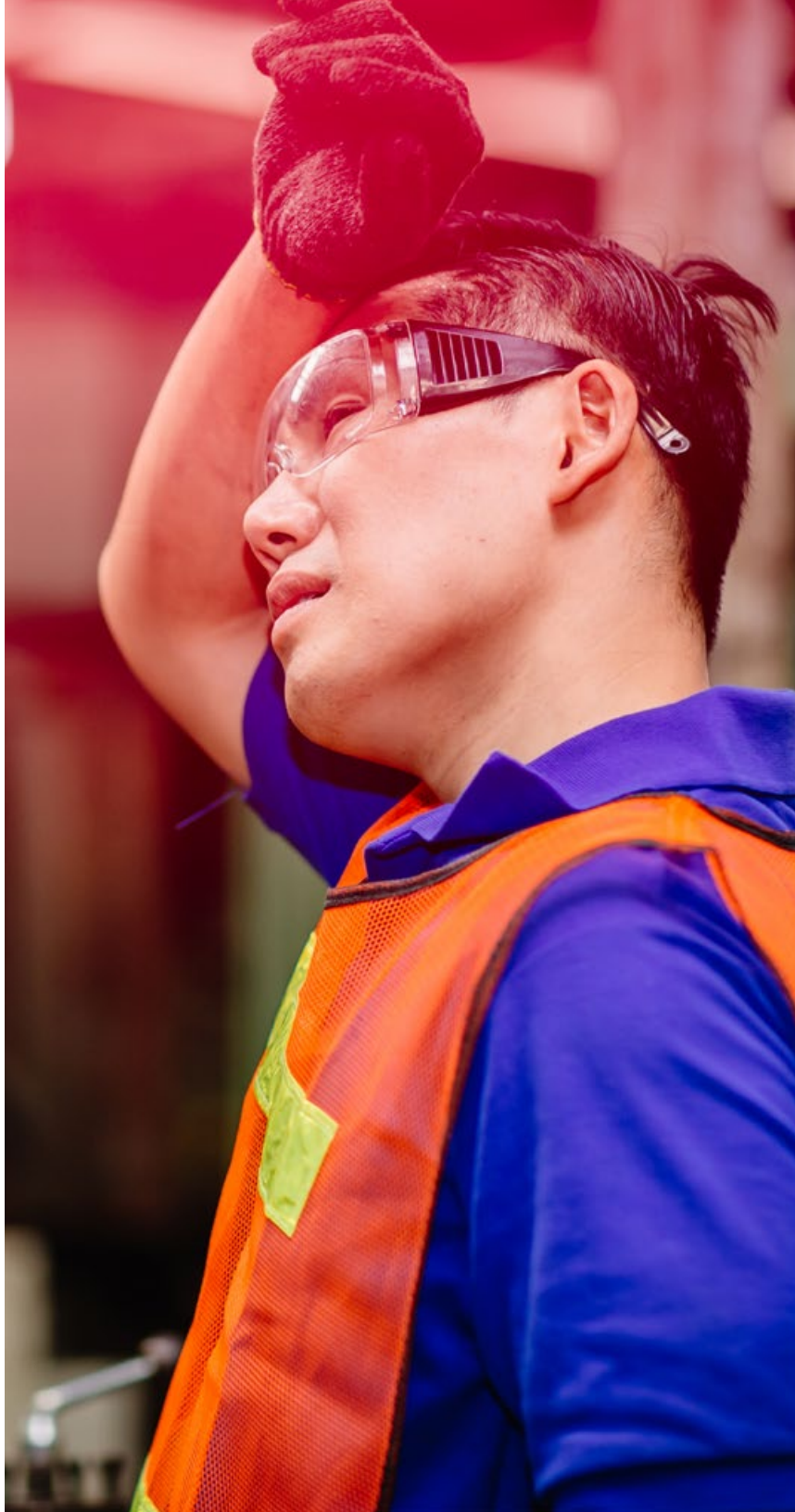
The temporary rule, adopted July 8, remains in effect until Jan. 3, 2022, or until it is replaced sooner by a permanent heat stress prevention rule, which is expected to occur later this year. The temporary rule applies to any workplace – outdoors and indoors – where heat dangers are caused by the weather.

Oregon OSHA encourages a careful reading of the entire rule (links below), which reflects the best available science, and input from labor and employer stakeholders. However, a quick guide to the rule's key requirements is available in both English and Spanish.

The rule incorporates the heat index, which is what the temperature feels like to the human body when relative humidity is combined with the air temperature. Oregon OSHA offers a video tutorial on using the Federal OSHA/NIOSH Heat Safety App, an important mobile tool for planning outdoor work activities based on how hot it feels during the day.

The mobile app features a real-time heat index and hourly forecast at your location. It also offers safety and health recommendations.

Under Oregon OSHA's temporary emergency requirements, employers are required to take specific steps when the heat index reaches or exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit, including providing sufficient shade and an adequate supply of drinking water. When the heat index exceeds 90 degrees Fahrenheit, employers are required to follow all of the rules at the 80-degree threshold and to take more measures. Those measures include



communication and observation, regular cool-down breaks, emergency planning, and gradual adaptation of employees to the heat.

Meanwhile, Oregon OSHA offers consultation services and technical specialists – free resources involving no fault, no citations, and no penalties – in the following ways:

Consultation services – Provides free help with safety and health programs, including how to control and eliminate hazards, and hands-on training

- Phone (toll-free in Oregon): 800-922-2689
- Field offices
- Online
- Email: consult.web@oregon.gov

Technical staff – Helps employers understand requirements and how to apply them to their worksites

- Phone (toll-free in Oregon): 800-922-2689
- Online
- Email: tech.web@oregon.gov

More resources – including a comprehensive list of state and national education and training resources for preventing heat illness for workers – are available as part of Oregon OSHA's media release – available in English and Spanish – about the temporary heat stress prevention requirements.

The emergency rule documents are available on Oregon OSHA's Adopted Rules page: Oregon Occupational Safety and Health : Adopted Rules : Rulemaking : State of Oregon

Temporary Rules to Address Employee Exposure to High Ambient Temperatures: Temporary Rules to Address Employee Exposure to High Ambient Temperatures (oregon.gov)

Text of adopted rules: Text of Temporary Rules to Address Employee Exposure to High Ambient Temperatures (oregon.gov)

Workers have a right to a safe and healthy workplace, including the right to be safe from the dangers of heat stress. They have the right to raise health and safety concerns, free from retaliation. If they do not believe their concerns are being addressed, they have a right to file a complaint with Oregon OSHA. The division does not give advance notice of inspections.

Smoke, face masks, and rhabdomylosis

By Ellis Brasch

Oregon is in the midst of yet another devastating wildfire season and – thanks to the abundance of smoke during all stages of wildland fires – respiratory diseases remain a significant health issue for anyone fighting wildfires on the front lines. Also, the intense physical exertion involved in wildland firefighting poses a hazard to firefighters, but it's much more serious than sore muscles – it's called rhabdomylosis.

Do face masks offer any protection against wildfire smoke? And what is rhabdomylosis? Here is what you should know.

Face masks: Know their limitations

There are a variety of face masks commercially available for wildland firefighting, including face protectors, shield hoods, shrouds, and bandanas. Some even have air-filter inserts. But wildland firefighter face masks are not respirators; they act as barriers that help block out some larger particulates, such as ash. They do not supply fresh air or oxygen and they don't protect against harmful contaminants in wildfire smoke, including:

- Acrolein and formaldehyde are highly irritating to the mucous membranes.
- Carbon monoxide can cause breathing problems, and – in extremely high doses – unconsciousness and death.
- The smaller fraction of airborne particulates such as soot that can irritate the respiratory tract.

Are there NIOSH-approved wildland firefighting face masks?

No. NIOSH approves only respirators. The only

NIOSH-approved respirator that protects against smoke inhalation is a self-contained, breathing apparatus (SCBA), which is not practical to use under typical wildland fire conditions.

Do bandanas provide protection?

No. Smoke particles, gases, and vapors can easily pass through dry and wet bandanas.

Can firefighters use face masks when fighting wildfires?

Yes. Face masks can be used as long as firefighters take other precautions to keep exposure to the harmful components contained in smoke below Oregon OSHA's permissible exposure limits – and when the fire management team or employer allows them.

For more information, see Oregon OSHA's Hazard Alert: Wildland firefighting face masks.

Rhabdomyolysis: What is it?

Rhabdomyolysis (often called rhabdo) is a rare, but potentially serious, medical condition in which damaged muscle cells rapidly break down and release a protein called myoglobin into the bloodstream. If not recognized and treated early, rhabdomyolysis can result in permanent disability or potentially life-threatening conditions affecting the heart and kidneys.

Wildland firefighters can develop rhabdomyolysis due to their prolonged physical exertion in hot environments. Rhabdomyolysis is often mistaken for heat stress and dehydration, but it is an entirely different disorder, and can occur even in physically fit individuals.

How does rhabdomyolysis occur?

Rhabdomyolysis can occur from physical damage to muscle cells and by nonphysical damage that interferes with muscle cell metabolism. The damaged muscle fibers may release myoglobin into the bloodstream. When myoglobin reaches the kidneys, it can block passageways within the kidneys and lead to kidney damage and, in some cases, kidney failure; the effects typically develop one to two days after the initial muscle damage.

What are the symptoms of rhabdomyolysis?

- Muscle aches or pains that seem excessive for the amount of exercise done
- Muscle weakness and cramping
- Tea-colored or cola-colored urine
- Reduced or no urine output
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid heart rate
- Abdominal pain
- Confusion
- Fever

What can increase the risk for rhabdomyolysis?

- An injury that damages muscle cells, such as pressure from a heavy object onto a body part
- Extreme muscle strain
- Over-the-counter medications such as decongestants and antihistamines
- Some antibiotics
- Dietary supplements such as creatine
- Some weight-loss products
- Cholesterol-lowering drugs known as statins
- Excessive caffeine intake
- Alcohol or illegal drug use

What to do if you think you or some else may have rhabdomyolysis

Seek medical treatment as soon as possible. The goal of treatment is to treat for shock and preserve kidney function. If symptoms are severe, call 911. If diagnosed early, a full recovery from rhabdomyolysis can usually be expected. How to protect yourself

- Know the symptoms rhabdomyolysis and heat-related illnesses
- Drink plenty of fluids and take frequent rest breaks
- Tell your supervisor immediately if you or a co-worker are experiencing symptoms of rhabdomyolysis or a heat-related illness

For more information, see Oregon OSHA's Hazard Alert: Rhabdomylosis.

Ask OSHA

Oregon OSHA

Department of Consumer and Business Services

What responsibilities does a competent person have in overseeing work in an excavation?

A competent person is an individual, designated by the employer, who can identify workplace hazards and has authority to take prompt corrective measures to correct them. The competent person must have the authority to order employees to leave an unsafe excavation, regardless of its depth, until the hazards have been corrected.

In addition, a competent person who oversees excavation work must:

- Understand Oregon OSHA's Division 3, Subdivision P, excavation requirements.
- Classify the soil at the excavation site with at least one manual test and one visual test.
- Determine the type of protective system used at a site by considering factors such as the excavation's soil characteristics, the nature of the work, the excavation's dimensions, and the equipment used to lower or position the protective system.
- Design any structural ramps that employees use to enter and exit the excavation.
- Inspect the excavation, adjacent areas, and the excavation's protective systems daily before work begins, as necessary throughout the shift, and after rain or other conditions that could increase the risk of a hazard.
- Monitor the methods used to control water from accumulating in an excavation.
- Test the excavation for hazardous atmospheres or oxygen deficiency when these conditions are possible.

If there are no existing hazards, the competent person can leave the excavation site for a short time, but must be present when a protective system is moved.

Short take

Ceremony honors fallen Oregon workers

By Aaron Corvin

Worker advocates gathered on Wednesday, April 28, near the Fallen Workers Memorial in Salem with a central focus: to grieve and remember those who lost their lives while on the job in Oregon last year.

The names of 53 Oregonians who died on the job in 2020 were read aloud during the Workers Memorial Day observance, which was held outside the Labor and Industries Building and livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook Live.

The advocates spoke of lives cut short, of lives lost to the COVID-19 pandemic, of the need to do a better job of building and maintaining safe and healthy workplaces.

"Let us pause for a moment and remember, and tomorrow and next month and next year and in all the years to come until this event is no longer necessary," said Michael Wood, administrator for Oregon OSHA. "Let's fight like hell to protect the living."

Wood said the ceremony was a reminder that we must do better in our fight against the pandemic in the workplace. "We may never know the full extent of those whose lives were lost, who lost lives of loved ones, who face serious illness, because of workplace exposures," he said.

Graham Trainor, president of Oregon AFL-CIO, which coordinated the ceremony, said the pandemic exposed the inextricable link between workplace health and the health of communities. He said the pandemic has caused disproportionate impacts to people of color and to workers on the frontlines across a variety of industries.

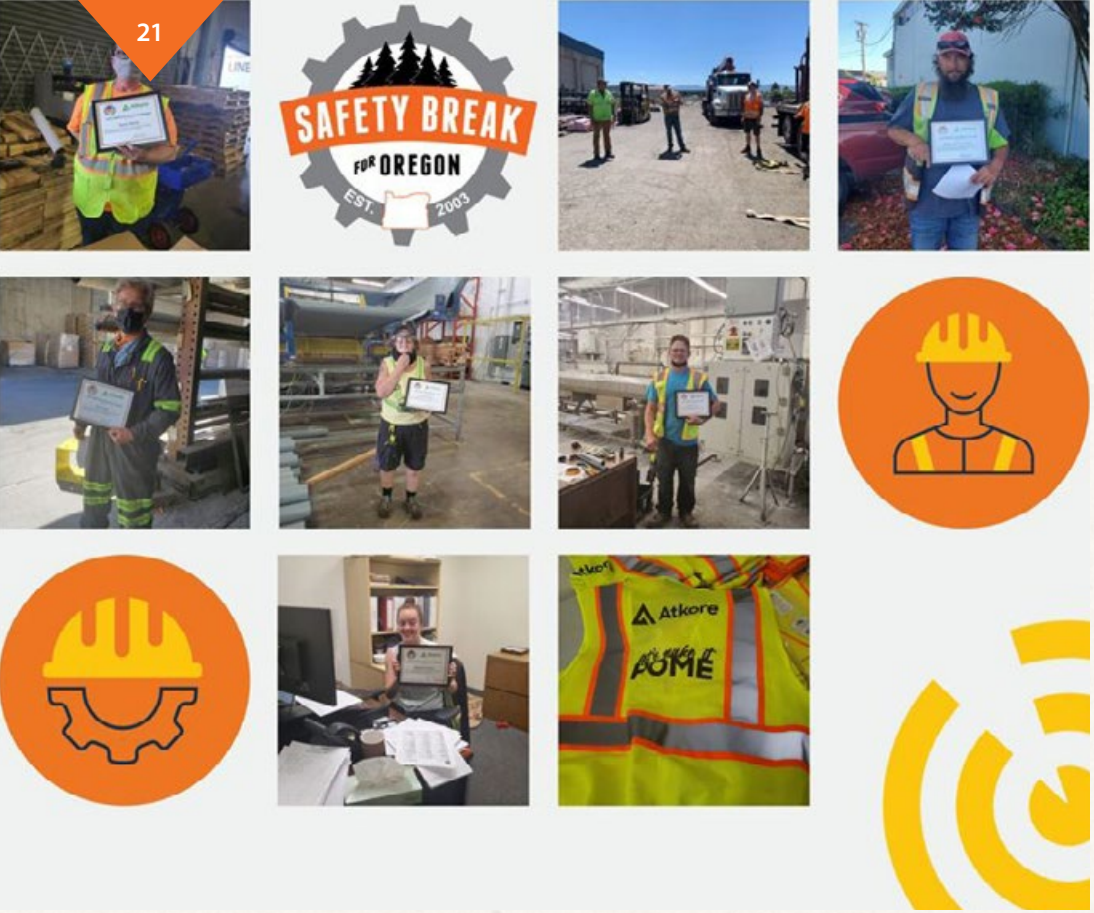
"We want safer working conditions," Trainor said. "We want to know we're not saying goodbye for the last time as we leave our homes for work."

The Rev. Richard Davis of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem invoked God to empower people "to bring more light and love and compassion into our hurting world."

"Let us now be gathered in spirit to remember and honor those Oregon workers lost on the many jobs they performed that served the common good – hard jobs, dangerous jobs, often times too low paying," Davis said. "Let us not take for granted all of those who put their well being and lives to work – especially those during the pandemic – workers who serve us. Let us be their advocates."

The observance continued later that evening, when a candlelight vigil was held at the Fallen Workers Memorial for the more than 590,000 Americans lost to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Oregon, more than 2,800 people have died from COVID-19. In the United States, more than 600,000 people have died from COVID-19. Globally, more than 4 million people have died from the coronavirus pandemic.



Short take

Employers take part in Safety Break

By Aaron Corvin

More than 35 employers participated in Safety Break for Oregon on May 12, promoting the value of keeping people safe and healthy while on the job.

During the 18th year of the event, employers engaged in a variety of workplace health and safety activities while following the appropriate COVID-19 safety measures.

For example, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, which has locations in Harney, Grant, Baker, and Union counties, conducted a "hazard scavenger hunt" to reflect on the importance of keeping people safe while on the job. It also created two virtual reality videos about power-line safety. The videos are available on the cooperative's website.

Meanwhile, Melvin Mark Brokerage Co. in Portland engaged in several Safety Break activities, including convening a companywide virtual meeting that featured a ladder safety presentation and fun prizes during a game of safety trivia.

Participating employers were entered to win one of three $100 checks, to be used for a luncheon of their choice. The Oregon SHARP Alliance sponsored the contest, which involved a random drawing. This year's prize winners were: Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative; City of Tigard; and LMC Construction Co.

Oregon OSHA coordinates the one-day Safety Break event, designed to help employers renew and celebrate their commitment to on-the-job safety. The stand-down is flexible to meet an employer's needs, and health and safety activities are determined by employers.

Short take

Four Oregon high schools win prizes in media contest to boost young worker safety

By Aaron Corvin

Teams of students at Parkrose, Ridgeview, Pendleton, and Sutherlin high schools have earned top prizes in a media contest designed to increase awareness about workplace safety for young workers.

High school students across Oregon were invited to participate in the annual contest organized by the Oregon Young Employee Safety Coalition (O[yes]). For the first time in the contest's 13-year history, the 2020-2021 competition featured a graphic design category – in addition to the long-running video category – and a new theme: "Work. It can be more dangerous than you think."

The top winners in each category were:

Video:

- Safety – The Virtual Way, Parkrose High School – Portland ($500)

Graphic design:

- Don't Let Your Safety Stumble, Ridgeview High School – Redmond ($500)
- Wire Trip, Pendleton High School ($400)
- Dangerous Work, Sutherlin High School ($300)

Check out the winning submissions and video clips on the (O[yes]) website. The first-place winning teams in each category also earned a matching award for their schools. Students were invited to create a 30- to 90-second video or a graphic design that inspires young workers to think twice about their personal health and safety at work, while highlighting the contest's theme.

The mission of (O[yes]) is to prevent injuries and illnesses to young workers through outreach, advocacy, and sharing resources with young workers, educators, employers, parents, and labor organizations.

The contest sponsors are SAIF Corporation, Oregon OSHA, Oregon Institute of Occupational Health Sciences at OHSU, SafeBuild Alliance, Oregon chapters of the American Society of Safety Professionals, Oregon SHARP Alliance, Construction Safety Summit and Hoffman Construction.

What's wrong with this picture?

An employee tries to exit a trench shield in a 25-foot-deep trench

Photo credit: Omar Lopez

Note: A professional engineer must design excavations deeper than 20 feet. Also, more hazards, including improper use of equipment based on manufacturer requirements for the protective system or failure of competent person duties, may be present.

Incident Alert!

Company ....Industrial scrap metal recycler.
Incident .....An employee was hospitalized overnight after experiencing symptoms of a heat-related illness while driving a truck.
Hazard.....Overexposure to extreme outdoor temperatures.

The company

The company buys bulk scrap metal from customers across Oregon and Washington, repackages the scrap, and then sells it to smelters and foundries. The company has a fleet of 60 trucks that transports scrap metal from customers to the company's main scrapyard in Portland.

The employee

The 54-year-old employee was one of the company's truck drivers; his shift typically began at 6 a.m. and ended between 4 and 6 p.m.

How the incident happened

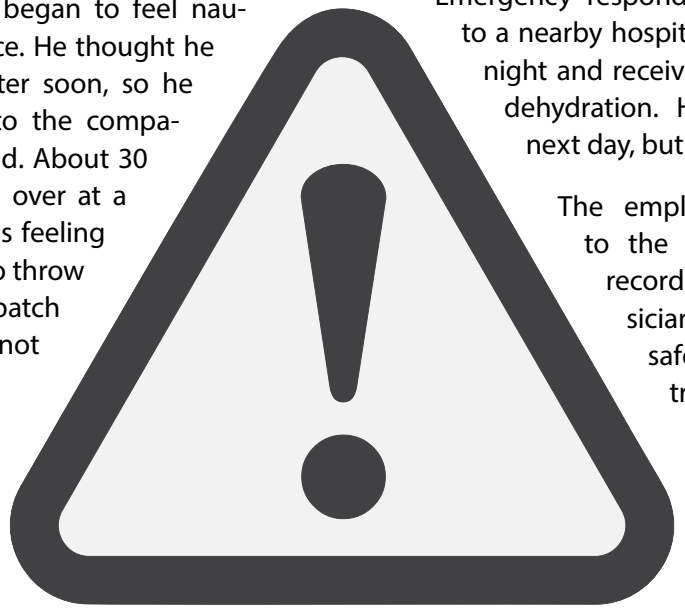
The employee started his shift at 6 a.m. on July 27, 2020, driving truck No. 87, which still had a broken air conditioner, although he had asked company mechanics a number of times over the past few months have it repaired. He also brought water with him because he knew it would be a hot day. Later that day the temperature would reach 98 degrees Fahrenheit, and he told his co-workers that he was sweating a lot while he was driving, even though he had the window open.

He finished his shift just after 6 p.m., but he felt very weak, so he had an early dinner at home and then went to bed about 8 p.m. The next day, he started his shift at 7 a.m., driving truck No. 87 to pick up a shipment of scrap metal from a customer's site about 50 miles away. He brought a cup of coffee with him, but no water. The truck's air conditioner was still not working and the temperature would reach 88 degrees Fahrenheit later in the day.

After he arrived at the customer's site, he waited for about 1.5 hours while the truck was loaded with scrap metal, then began to feel nauseous and threw up twice. He thought he would start feeling better soon, so he began the return trip to the company's scrapyard in Portland. About 30 minutes later, he pulled over at a rest stop because he was feeling very ill; then, he began to throw up again and called dispatch to report that he could not finish the trip.

The dispatcher did not ask him why he was feeling ill, but did send two other employees to meet him and pick up the truck. When they arrived 45 minutes later, they found him slumped over his steering wheel, but still conscious.

After drinking some Gatorade that his co-workers brought, he threw up again, so they called 911.



Emergency responders took the employee to a nearby hospital where he stayed overnight and received intravenous fluids for dehydration. He was discharged the next day, but did not return to work.

The employee did not consent to the release of his medical records, but the attending physician told the company's safety manager that he was treated for heat stroke.

Other findings

- The company provided heat stress training to all employees in 2019, but training records indicated that the employee did not attend because he was sick. However, he did not have the opportunity to make up the training. In 2020, the company canceled all training due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Company truck drivers were required to take 30-minute breaks for lunch and were allowed three other 10-minute breaks. Employees were allowed to take additional breaks if they felt tired. The company also had rules dictating how many hours an employee could drive each day, monitored by a GPS system.
- Other company drivers had also had problems getting truck air conditioners repaired. Company managers said that the most effective method was to leave the truck with a mechanic, write the repair request on the company maintenance log, and then, if it doesn't get fixed, to submit it "again and again" until it got fixed.
- Drivers said that water was available from jugs, but they typically carried an extra thermos or water bottle with them.
- Oregon OSHA sampling results showed that the truck's cab exceeded the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) Threshold Value Limit on July 27, indicating that the employee was exposed to excessive heat on that day. According to the ACGHI, there is also the risk of a carryover effect from a previous day's exposure to excessive heat.

Citations

- *437-001-0760(1)(c) – Employers responsibilities.* The company did not ensure that the air conditioner on truck No. 87 was working when outdoor temperatures reached 98 degrees Fahrenheit on July 27 and 88 degrees Fahrenheit on July 28, 2020.
- *437-001-0760(1)(d) – Employers responsibilities.* The company did not give the employee an opportunity to retake the heat stress safety training that he missed in June 2019.

What the company did to prevent future incidents

- The company fixed the truck's broken air conditioner.
- The company provided heat stress training to the employee after he returned to work.
- The company's heat stress plan now includes information on proper hydration methods.