



SAFETY MATTERS

A Newsletter of Hamilton County Human Resources -
Division of Risk Management

Risk
Management
& Safety

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news & notes

Risk Management & Safety Committee

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 9, 2014 at 10:00am in the Safety & Security Office, Room 628 of the Courthouse.

The purpose of this committee is to bring representatives of the various agencies, departments, and elected officials of Hamilton County together to collaborate on ways to promote a safe environment for employees and the public, and to develop ways to reduce risk to our people, property, and assets.

Did you know....

The number one cause of car accidents is not drunk drivers, or speeders, or those who run red lights. Instead, distracted drivers are the top cause of car accidents in the U.S. today. A distracted driver is a motorist that diverts his or her attention from the road, usually to talk on a cell phone, send a text message, or eat food.

Find out more at:

www.distraction.gov.

Workplace Safety Matters

Cheryl Keller, Director – Human Resources

Workplace safety matters! As an HR Director I understand that our employees are our most important resource as well as the largest line item in our budget. Often times you will hear employers talking about having a safe workplace to reduce costs in insurance, lost time and workers compensation. And, these are certainly important.

However, I believe we have an obligation to our employees to create a safe workplace. When employees see that their employer makes safety a priority, a level of trust and loyalty is created. This can reduce turnover and encourage higher productivity. The quality of the work improves because employees are happier and more productive.

The County is fortunate to have a great Risk Management Team. They are a great resource for all departments. Let's work together to make Hamilton County a safe place for our employees.

Top Three Myths about Workplace Safety

How many times have you heard people saying something that you know just isn't right? You don't have to go very far these days to encounter such statements with everyone having their say on blogs, YouTube, and even the nightly news. Safety is not immune. Here are just a few myths regarding safety:

Myth #3 You cannot create a hazard-free workplace

It is shocking how many people believe that no workplace can be made free of hazards. However, an accident-free workplace is possible. But it requires discipline and diligence to promote hazard awareness, implement effective training, and incorporate safe procedures and programs that equip people to recognize and mitigate hazards.

Myth #2 Being safe takes too much time and money

When people say that it takes too much time or money to be safe, they obviously don't understand the power of a cost/benefit analysis. Have you ever considered the direct and indirect cost of even a minor injury? And, the thought of pain and agony that an injury causes should be enough incentive to stay safe.

Myth #1 Accidents just happen

Research shows that over 99% of all accidents are preventable. The reality is that you have a great deal of control over the circumstances around you.

"Fate is the hunter for those least prepared." -Ernest K. Gann

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Heat Stress Symptoms

Symptoms of heat exhaustion:

- Headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting
- Weakness
- Profuse sweating
- Mood swings or erratic behavior
- Upset stomach or vomiting

Symptoms of heat stroke:

- Dry, hot skin with no sweating
- Mental confusion or loss of consciousness
- Seizures or convulsions

Preventing heat stress:

- Know signs/symptoms of heat-related illnesses, and monitor yourself and co-workers.
- Block out direct sun or other heat sources.
- Use cooling fans/air-conditioning, and rest regularly in shaded areas.
- Drink lots of water or fluids with proper electrolyte replacement.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothes.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, and heavy meals.

What to do for heat-related illnesses:

- Call 911 (or local emergency number)
- While waiting for help to arrive:
 - Move affected person to a cool, shaded area.
 - Loosen or remove heavy clothing.
 - Provide cool (not cold) drinking water.
 - Fan and mist the person with water.

Remember: Heat related illnesses can be prevented!

Summer Safety

Learn to beat the heat

Summer is upon us and with that comes rising temperatures. Consequently, working or playing in high temperatures can cause heat disorders that result in serious health conditions. These conditions range from mild heat cramps to dangerous heatstroke which, if not treated immediately, can lead to death.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, in order to maintain a constant internal temperature, the human body finds ways to rid itself of excess heat. This is done primarily by varying the rate and amount of blood circulation through the skin and by the release of fluid onto the skin by the sweat glands. The process of lowering body temperature requires the heart to pump more blood, and blood circulates closer to the surface of the skin so the extra heat is lost to the environment.

If heat loss from increased blood circulation is not adequate, the sweat glands kick in and shed sweat onto the surface of the skin. Evaporation of the sweat cools the skin. But when humidity is high, evaporation decreases. More blood goes to the external surface of the body, with less going to muscles, brain, and other organs. This can cause a drop in strength, an increase in fatigue, and possibly, a change in mental condition.

What to Look For and Actions to Take

Know the Symptoms of Heat Disorders and appropriate steps to take...

Heat Disorder	Symptoms	First Aid
Sunburn	Skin redness and pain, possible swelling, blisters, fever, headaches.	Take a shower, using soap, to remove oils that may block pores preventing the body from cooling naturally. If blisters occur, apply dry, sterile dressings and get medical attention.
Heat Cramps	Painful spasms usually in leg and abdominal muscles. Heavy sweating.	Firm pressure on cramping muscles or gentle massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue.
Heat Exhaustion	Heavy sweating, weakness, skin cold, pale and clammy. Weak pulse. Normal temperature possible. Fainting, vomiting.	Get victim to lie down in a cool place. Loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned place. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue. If vomiting occurs, seek immediate medical attention.
Heat Stroke (Sun Stroke)	High body temperature (106+). Hot, dry skin. Rapid, strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness. Victim will likely not sweat.	Heat stroke is a severe medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 or emergency medical services or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal. Move victim to a cooler environment. Try a cool bath or sponging to reduce body temperature. Use extreme caution. Remove clothing. Use fans and/or air conditioners. DO NOT GIVE FLUIDS

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Distracted Driving Stats

- An estimated 421,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver, this was a nine percent increase from the estimated 387,000 people injured in 2011.
- 10% of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted.
- Drivers in their 20s make up 27 percent of the distracted drivers in fatal crashes. **(NHTSA)**
- At any given daylight moment across America, approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell phones or manipulating electronic devices while driving, a number that has held steady since 2010. **(NOPUS)**
- Engaging in visual-manual subtasks (such as reaching for a phone, dialing and texting) associated with the use of hand-held phones and other portable devices increased the risk of getting into a crash by three times. **(VTTI)**
- Five seconds is the average time your eyes are off the road while texting. When traveling at 55mph, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded. **(2009, VTTI)**
- Headset cell phone use is not substantially safer than hand-held use. **(VTTI)**
- A quarter of teens respond to a text message once or more every time they drive. 20 percent of teens and 10 percent of parents admit that they have extended, multi-message text conversations while driving. **(UMTRI)**

Learn to use Fire Extinguishers

You just never know when you might need one

Fire extinguishers. You pass them all the time as you walk the hallways here at the County, or perhaps at school, and hopefully at home too. But no matter how many times you've seen them in your day-to-day activities, you've probably given little thought as to how you actually use one. Maybe you assume it's so simple it's not something you need to learn.

Well, it's true that using a fire extinguisher isn't rocket science by any stretch, but there are a few basics you need to be aware of – and probably aren't. According to FEMA, the majority of Americans don't know how to use an extinguisher, even if they have one in their home. This is a dangerous knowledge gap. Fires double in size every 60 seconds, so you don't want to be fumbling around in an emergency situation.

Get the right type

Fire extinguishers come in a wide variety of types – each one designed to put out a different kind of fire.



Class A – Ordinary solid combustibles like wood, cloth, and paper products.



Class B - Flammable liquids and gases.



Class C - Electrical fires. (Do not use water to put out this kind of fire – you could get electrocuted!)



Class D - Flammable metals.



Class K - Oils and grease fires. (Never use water on a grease fire – it will cause the flames to explode and spread.)

Most fire extinguishers for homes and public spaces are classified as **Class ABC extinguishers**, meaning they're suitable for putting out wood and paper fires, flammable liquid fires, *and* electrical fires. ABC extinguishers use a dry chemical as the extinguishing agent. You can buy an ABC extinguisher for about **\$30 - \$60 on Amazon** or at your nearest hardware store. Get the biggest one you can comfortably handle to maximize its discharge time and range.

Class K extinguishers are used in commercial kitchens because they're more powerful for dealing with grease fires and the discharged chemicals are less likely to damage the cooking appliances. But for small grease fires in a home kitchen, an ABC extinguisher will likely get the job done. An ABC is still going to damage your stove though, so if it's a very small fire, try to smother it with a pot lid or wool blanket first, before you resort to the extinguisher.

How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

If you encounter a fire, mentally go through this checklist of questions before attempting to put it out with an extinguisher:

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Important Rules for Dealing with Fires:

1. Do not fight a fire if the fire has spread beyond the spot where it started.
2. Be certain you will not endanger yourself, or others if you attempt to extinguish a fire.
3. Pull the fire alarm.
4. Call 911.
5. Assist anyone in danger.

Check out this 2 minute instructional video on using a fire extinguisher:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCSms-jyOao

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Are you taller than the fire? Fire extinguishers are designed to put out fires in the incipient stage. That's fireman talk for when the fire is just getting started. When it gets past the beginning stage, a fire becomes too large to fight with a portable extinguisher. How do you know if the fire is still in the incipient stage? Just give the flame the once over to see if it's taller than you. If it is, hightail it out of there and call 911. Your fire extinguisher will likely be no match for the flames.

Do you have the right fire extinguisher for the type of fire? Remember, extinguishers are designed for certain fire types. If you're facing a grease fire, a simple A extinguisher (which contains only pressurized water) won't put it out.

Is the fire extinguisher pressurized? Check the gauge on the extinguisher to see if it's fully charged and pressurized. If the needle is in the green, you're good. If not, you won't have enough pressure to put the fire out. Forget it and get out of there.

Get in Position

If you can answer "yes" to all three of those questions, you're ready to put out the fire with the extinguisher. If possible, position yourself with your back to an unobstructed exit so that you can get out quickly if you need to. The discharge range for extinguishers is typically 6-10 feet. You want to be far enough away to not be in danger of being burned, and close enough that the discharge will be effective.

PASS!

To employ the extinguisher with proper technique, just remember the acronym "PASS."

- **Pull the pin.**
- **Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire.** Hitting the tops of the flame with the extinguisher won't be effective. You got to smother the sucker at its base.
- **Squeeze the trigger.** In a controlled manner, squeeze the trigger to release the agent.
- **Sweep from side to side.** Sweep the nozzle from side to side until the fire is put out. Keep aiming at the base while you do so. Most extinguishers will give you about 10-20 seconds of discharge time.

Slowly back away. Even if the fire appears to be extinguished, don't turn your back on it. There might be unseen hot spots or hidden fires that can ignite into a large flame at any moment. You want to be on guard for that. Once you've used a fire extinguisher, even if you didn't deplete all the pressure, you must get it recharged. Do so as soon as possible. If it's a disposable extinguisher, throw it away and replace.

If you can get some hands-on training with a fire extinguisher (some emergency services/community organizations offer classes), it's highly recommended that you do so. But now you know the basics. Next time you see a fire extinguisher in the hallway, you can give it a nod of confidence as you PASS it by.