

SUMMER 2018

RISKmanager



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By Derek Neubauer, Risk Control Consultant

Hot Weather Hazards

School district employees often spend their summer workdays in hot environments and may succumb to heat stress. According to the National Safety Council, hot conditions pose special hazards to the safety and health of your staff members.

Recognize and treat heat-related disorders

There are three major disorders related to heat stress: heat stroke, heat exhaustion and heat cramps.

Heat stroke (also called sunstroke) is a life-threatening disorder. The primary symptoms of heat stroke are an extremely high body temperature and hot, dry flushed skin. A rapid pulse, headache and nausea often accompany these symptoms. People who suffer from heat stroke must be cooled quickly to avoid permanent disability or death. Move the victim to a cool place, and keep the head and shoulders elevated. Seek medical attention immediately.

Heat exhaustion is not as serious as heat stroke. Its symptoms include pale, clammy feeling skin, and excessive sweating. The victim may be extremely tired and weak. Move the victim to a cool place and keep the legs elevated. If there is no improvement within 30 minutes, call for medical assistance.

Heat cramps usually occur in the arms and legs of the person during strenuous work. The cramps rarely are serious and generally do not last very long. Rest the affected body part, and give the victim water to drink. Do not massage the cramping area.

Another minor, heat-related disorder is called **heat syncope**. A victim of heat syncope feels dizzy and nauseated and could faint. Have the victim lie down in a cool area.

Heat rash or **sunburn** is a more common heat-related disorder. Treat the victim according to accepted first aid procedures.

You can take many steps to prevent heat stress. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends employers give workers six days to gradually get used to hot work environments. Employers should train workers how to recognize heat-stress symptoms. Workers also should learn basic first aid for each disorder along with these safety tips:

- Avoid large meals whenever you work in a hot environment.
- Wear lightweight and loose clothing, including a hat.
- Apply sunscreen to protect yourself against sunburn and take frequent breaks.
- Avoid consuming caffeinated beverages (caffeine is a diuretic and can cause dehydration).

Avoid dehydration before and during exposure to hot environments. Many experts recommend special drinks called electrolyte-replacement fluids.

The body can lose a quart or more of sweat in just one hour.

More than a health hazard

Heat stress is both a health hazard and a safety hazard. Workers in hot environments often are fatigued and sometimes do not think clearly. Sweaty palms can create a poor grip and cause them to drop tools. Exercise care when you work around electrical devices since sweat is an excellent conductor. Heat stress can be life threatening. Take the necessary precautions to protect yourself when working in hot environments.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING+ Identifying Roadway Hazards

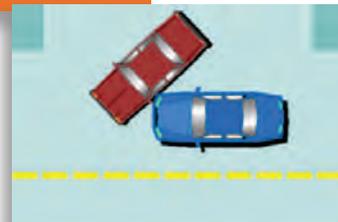
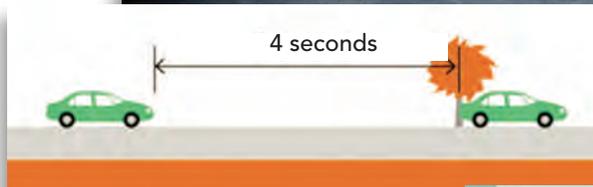
By Jake Ruziecki, Risk Control Consultant

We all know that summer means the bloom of our unofficial state flower—the orange traffic cone—and with it increased traffic and heightened tensions on the roadway. This makes it a great time to cover some defensive driving tips to avoid collision hazards on the roadway.



**ROAD
WORK
AHEAD**

To ensure the highest safety in areas with road hazards such as construction work, try to find an alternate route. If that is not possible, scan the road ahead and stay alert for signage that indicates the need to merge lanes. Try to merge early to avoid being trapped in an unsafe situation. Maintaining a safe traveling distance behind the vehicle ahead will allow you time to identify any signage or hazards and allow for space to avoid a collision from sudden stops.



If any condition including precipitation, darkness or fog shortens your sight distance to less than four seconds, you need to safely slow down or stop and wait for driving conditions to improve. Providing an adequate space cushion will allow you to safely plan for other drivers that may cut into your lane or suddenly stop ahead of you. Rely on your mirrors to identify any potential hazards and

Rear-end collisions account for approximately one-third of all motor vehicle collisions.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, more than two million rear-end collisions took place in 2015. That's two million collisions, 500,000 injuries, and more than 2,000 fatalities that could have been greatly reduced just by allowing extra room. Although the only space that you may fully control is the space cushion ahead of you, it is important to leave adequate space on all sides, including above your vehicle, especially for buses. A safe rule when it comes to following distance is to create a four-second space cushion between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead in dry weather with clear visibility.

To contend with the mundane effects of traffic or driving down open roads where you may lose focus or feel like you are on "auto-pilot," scan the area ahead to identify any roadway hazards and identify a fixed reference point and count off your space cushion to adjust your safe-stopping distance. A good practice for modifying your space cushion to adverse effects is to add an additional second for each unfavorable condition. For example:

- **Dry/Clear Visibility** – Four-second following distance
- **Wet Roads/Rain** – Five-second following distance
- **Snow** – Six-second following distance
- **Ice/Sleet** – Seven-second following distance

maintain adequate space between vehicles traveling next to or behind your vehicle.

The second most likely type of collision is an impact from an angle. This includes collisions from a vehicle suddenly merging into another vehicle's lane and collisions where the side of a vehicle is impacted by the front or rear of another vehicle, often described as a "T-bone" collision. T-bone collisions are most likely to occur at intersections, which is why it is important that drivers scan the intersection ahead to identify any potential vehicles that may enter their path of travel. To reduce the likelihood of an accident at intersections, a defensive driver should:

- Make sure vehicle is in the **correct lane** for travel;
- Use **turn signals** to alert others of their intentions;
- Keep the **wheels straight** and **foot on the brake** while waiting to turn;
- Maintain a **safe speed** behind the vehicle ahead and **cover the brake** when traveling through an intersection;
- Wait for **traffic to clear** before entering the intersection.

As always, be sure to follow the driver rulebook provided by your transportation department. By incorporating these strategies into your driving, you should notice an increase in your awareness on the roadway. For more information, visit our Risk Control page on the CM Regent website for additional transportation risk materials and services available.



If the Shoe Fits, Wear It ... Not So Fast!

By Kyle Stewart, Risk Control Consultant

The idea of selecting the most appropriate type of footwear tread for the work task is a lot more complicated than simply if the shoe fits. Below are factors that should be taken into consideration when determining which is the most appropriate type of footwear tread to select based on your individual work duties and exposures.

Job Duties

Consider all duties that are part of your daily work tasks, including *unexpected* duties.

- How much do you walk throughout the day?
The greater number of steps you take, the greater risk you are for a loss of traction and sustaining a slip/fall injury.
- Do your duties require you to unexpectedly run or quickly change directions (i.e., chase after student, respond quickly to an emergency, etc.)? If so, avoid wearing footwear tread with inadequate depth or with a high heel.
- Are you required to walk on different types of surfaces throughout the day (i.e., vinyl floor tile, terrazzo, concrete, asphalt, carpet, gymnasium floors, grass)?

Environmental Conditions

- Interior environmental conditions
 - Spills/wet floors in hallways, cafeterias, kitchens, bathrooms, areas near water fountains, etc.
 - Food debris in cafeterias and lunch rooms.
 - Wet floors from maintenance (i.e., floor stripping, waxing, wet mopping).
 - Transitions between different flooring substrates (i.e., carpet to vinyl tile, etc.).
- Exterior environmental conditions
 - Presence of inclement weather (i.e., rain, snow, ice), wet grass or mud.
 - Presence of uneven walking surfaces (i.e., raised edges of sidewalks/parking lots, curbs, holes/depressions).

Walking Surfaces

- No two walking surfaces are the same, some walking surfaces afford an increased coefficient of friction which reduces the loss of traction.
- The loss of traction is affected when other variables are introduced.
 - Variables include the presence of water, type and depth of tread worn, and the assumption that the flooring surface is maintained per the manufacturer's guidelines, etc.

Employee Behaviors

(i.e., walking pace, length of walking stride, stairs, situation awareness of potential slip/fall hazards)

- The longer the walking stride, the greater the risk of a slip/fall injury. As the walking stride increases, the “amount” of footwear tread contacting the walking surface is reduced to the heel of the shoe, which causes the heel slide out.
- When the walking pace increases, the individual is at a greater risk of “stumbling” over his/her own feet and/or loss of traction because the footwear tread is only in contact with the walking surface for short periods of time.
- Staff should scan the area where their next step will contact the walking surface for potential slip/fall hazards (i.e., spills, wet floors, cords, objects, etc.).
- When ascending/descending stairs, individuals should place their entire foot on the stair tread as opposed to only the stair nose edge. Avoid running or skipping steps and maintain a hand on the handrail at all times.
- Avoid carrying items when possible that may cause you to overcompensate because more weight is distributed to one side versus the other.

Footwear Categories

- Work/hiking boots
- Open heel/toe (not recommended for most work environments)
 - Sandals, flip-flops, clogs
- Athletic Shoes
 - Running shoes, basketball shoes, etc.
- Dress Shoes
 - Smooth leather sole, rubber molded, etc.
- Flats
- Heeled (shoes with a heel higher than one-half inch)
- Footwear Tread: Slip-resistant, smooth leather, rubber, lugged/aggressive tread, foam, etc.)
 - Slip-resistant footwear is specifically designed to enable the footwear tread to disperse water away from the footwear tread and maintain contact with the walking surface.
 - The footwear manufacturer will specifically state and/or mark the footwear if it is indeed slip-resistant.
 - Athletic/basketball shoes are not slip-resistant. Think of the crews that wipe the gymnasium floor when a basketball player falls on the gymnasium floor; the surface is wiped up to prevent the basketball players from slipping on sweat/moisture.

How to Choose the Right Shoe for the Job

Wearing the right shoe will go a long way in preventing a potential slip/fall injury.

- The outsole of the shoe is the area in contact with the walking surface. If the sole’s properties and walking surface have a high enough coefficient of friction, good traction will be achieved between the two.
- Flat leather or plastic-soled shoes offer minimal slip resistance between the shoe and the walking surface; therefore, both would be poor choices on wet walking surfaces.
- Some soles have flat surfaces, while others offer a tread design that can improve the traction between the walking surface and the sole, especially if the surface may be slippery.
- The depth and spread of the treads are important. Closely patterned treads or treads with minimal depth will not allow liquids to be dispersed from the tread pattern and may create a hydroplaning effect between the sole and the walking surface.
- It’s important to periodically inspect shoe tread for wear and replace shoes when significant wear is noted (i.e., when the tread is worn to an area that exceeds the diameter of two pennies).

Reporting Near-Misses

COULD RESULT IN A SAFER WORKPLACE

by Mark Nease, Risk Control Consultant



Imagine that an employee exits his car in the parking lot, proceeds to walk toward the building entrance in his new “extra-comfort” athletic shoes and slips on a spot of black ice but with much agility, counteracts his momentum and manages to not fall. He then steps over a concrete parking block and slightly trips over the piece of steel rebar protruding several inches from the parking block’s surface and then jaywalks across the bus entrance road, nearly getting struck by a moving school bus. He proceeds to enter the school building and then go about his business for the day, communicating to nobody about any of his safety misfortunes.

Actual incidents like the one mentioned above happen frequently in the workplace. They are referred to as *near-miss incidents*. The National Safety Council defines near-miss incidents as unplanned events that did not result in injury, illness or damage, but had the potential to do so. Near-miss incidents are also referred to by some as “close calls.”

Near-miss incidents are indicators that problems exist, and if not corrected, could lead to an injurious accident. It is so important that near-miss incidents are reported, investigated and corrected before they have an opportunity to resurface and result in injury. Simply put, the sharing of near-miss incidents is a way of protecting people from future accidents and, therefore, becomes a viable part of your safety culture.

Consider all the accidents the workplace safety committee or other staff investigated over the previous three years. How many of these accidents occurred because of previous near-miss incident scenarios that were never reported and investigated? Had employees initially reported their near-miss incidents, and those near-miss incidents were then investigated and remediated, many of those accidents may not have occurred in the first place.

In the previous fictional scenario, there were many near-miss incidents the employee experienced when walking from his car to the building, but since he proceeded through his daily routine without reporting any of them, those incidents could now result in injurious accidents sometime in the future. A deeper misfortune is that anybody is susceptible to having one of those accidents.

Consider Heinrich’s Incident Ratio Model in Figure 1. Of 3,000 unsafe acts, behaviors or conditions that occur in the workplace, 300 result in a near-miss incident. Of the 300 near-miss incidents in the workplace, 29 of them result in accidents having minor injuries to employees. Of those 29 accidents, one of them results with an accident whereby the person suffers serious injury or death. Many use Heinrich’s Model to coin the phrase, “Frequency Breeds Severity.”

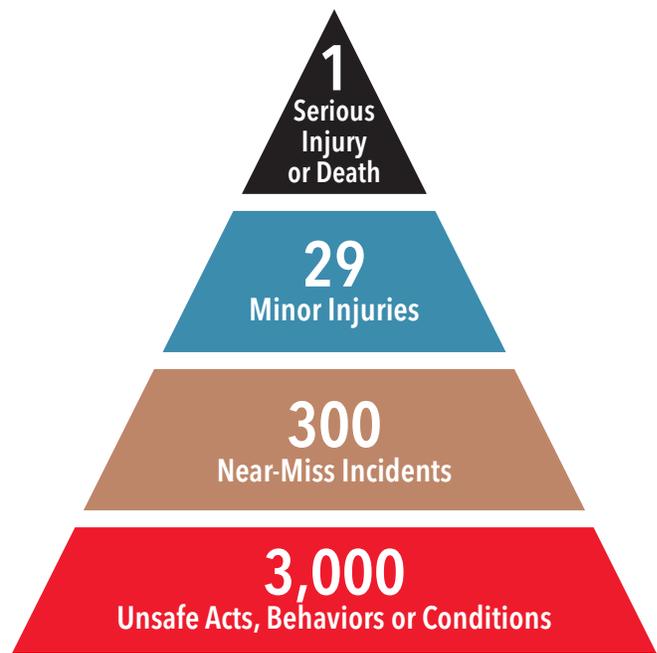


Figure 1. Heinrich’s Incident Ratio Model

Staff may only investigate incidents/accidents that result in an injury. However, based on Heinrich’s Incident Ratio Model, when near-miss incidents are reported, investigated and remediated, in theory, the frequency and severity of injurious accidents are reduced.

To incorporate near-miss incident reporting into your safety program, leadership must pave the way for its success. To be successful, staff should feel comfortable reporting near-miss incidents and should not fear any disciplinary action or peer pressure. Staff should be trained on its intent, which is, for a business to learn all the factors that contributed to the near-miss incidents so that corrective controls could then be implemented to reduce the risk of future injurious accidents.

Every workplace needs to ask the question, “Are unreported near-miss incidents a loophole in our safety program?” How the workplace responds to this question determines the viability of its safety effort in reducing injuries.

Complacency and Workplace Safety

By Edgar Boord, Risk Control Consultant

Awareness is one of the fundamental building blocks necessary for establishing and maintaining a safe work culture and environment. When that block begins to crumble, the potential for incidents to occur tends to become greater. Incidents are not always the result of a physical hazard, such as improper guarding or an unmarked liquid spill on the floor, but often occur as the result of complacency with surroundings that are navigated daily. For instance, you may have successfully walked into work every morning without incident for years, but one day you trip on the sidewalk curb and sustain an injury. Allowing autopilot to take over, a byproduct of complacency, may be the reason for that otherwise preventable incident.

Taking note of what and who are around you at all times is imperative to avoiding an accident. Your environment and the people in it can change in seconds. Consider safe driving techniques that should be applied while operating a vehicle. A driver should always be aware of a passing vehicle before changing lanes. It would be unsafe to change lanes without checking your mirrors and quickly looking over your shoulder to make sure the lane is clear. That same rule of the road should be applied to everyday life. It is never safe to assume an area is clear to walk through without paying attention. Someone may have an extension cord running across the floor or a coworker might be approaching an intersecting corner of the hallway you are walking toward. Always remain aware of your surroundings, no matter how often you navigate the area.

On the other hand, there may also be complacency following success. If your place of employment has successfully implemented various safety measures and greatly reduced incidents for the fiscal year, this is an excellent step toward a safe workplace. Once this has been achieved, would it be acceptable to become complacent with the safety controls and

measures in place? For example, a successful athlete has become this year's most valuable player. Would he become complacent with his abilities and reduce the frequency and intensity of his training? Absolutely not. Likewise, employers should continue their efforts to raise and maintain awareness, as well as implement controls and policies that assist in establishing a safe workplace.

The ability to assess what you or your employees do and identify potential shortcomings is an excellent quality that anyone can achieve with practice. This outlook on routine tasks may be the difference between an incident and successfully completing the job. It may help to take time and consider what potential hazards may be associated with that task. Safety professionals often use job safety or job hazard analyses to identify what hazards and risks are associated with a task/job duty. These analyses break down the process into individual steps, and assess each step according to what potential risks are involved, as well as what controls or safeguards can

be implemented to reduce that risk. Does a task require repetitive lifting, even if the object being lifted only weighs ten pounds? If so, can material handling or moving equipment be used during the process to reduce the stress on an individual's back and other muscles? This may also make the process more efficient since more items can be moved at one time. Any process can be modified to include safety measures and potentially be made easier.

Anything can change in a year, month, day, and even a few seconds. Complacency with your work environment, routine tasks, and successes may lead to being unprepared for those changes. A constant state of awareness, coupled with the ability to assess routine tasks, can be vital to the avoidance and prevention of an incident.

Incidents are always unexpected. Although you may have performed the same task day after day without incident, it does not mean that it is entirely safe.

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