

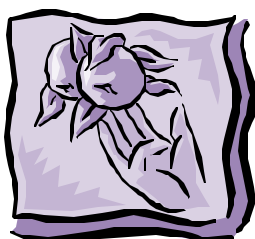
BITS & PIECES

Volume 4, Issue 2
May 2003

HEALTH AND SAFETY training

By: David L Dolenar, Deputy Executive Officer

These are very difficult times for all of us. We are in the midst of a war with Iraq. We are faced with the State's worst budget crisis in history. Our own County budget crisis is becoming more and more difficult as we continue to look at how we can cut and do more with less. This is of course just at work. We have our own individual challenges outside of work hours as well.



Health and Safety Training
October 14, 15 & 16

job of doing that. Our commitment to provide County staff and our partnering agencies with quality training will not change.

This year will be dedicated exclusively to training in three days. All participants will have the opportunity to consider not only safety related issues but all aspects of healthier living. The theme for this year is "Harvesting Healthier Lifestyles". The training is scheduled for October 14, 15, 16 at the Modesto Centre Plaza.

This year we have thought long and hard about the Wellness and Safety Fair? Can we afford to do it? Can we afford not to do it? Can we provide our County staff and other partnering agencies a better program but at a lower cost?

The fact is, we cannot ignore that we are mandated to undergo safety training as required by CALOSHA. We have received very complimentary surveys from many of you in years past that really said our Wellness and Safety Fair was a worthwhile event. We also received a few surveys from some of you that said our event was a waste of time and money.

We have worked tirelessly over the years to put together an event that we hoped would be entertaining, educational and beneficial to all who attended and of course would fulfill the mandates. We believe we did a pretty good

Last year President Bush made his pledge to make America a healthier America. With today's health related issues such as heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol, breast cancer and high blood pressure, it is time to be proactive and take a stand for healthier living.

We are confident that this year's training will focus on accident causation factors so we can begin to reduce Workers' Compensation costs. **This year we will reduce our costs by eliminating lunches, transportation services, the exhibit hall and entertainment.** We hope by limiting our event to training this year we will be able to help ease the budgetary impacts and still remain in compliance with the law. Thank you for your support and understanding.

Inside this issue:

California Legislative Update	2
Home Garden Pesticide Safety	2
Budget vs. Safety	3
What are Customers Really Saying?	4
Study - Cell phones cause 'Blindness' in Drivers	4



Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting the bull not to attack you because you are a vegetarian.

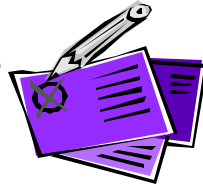


California Legislative Updates

By: Barbara Cooper, Employee Benefits Manager

Assembly Bill 1401 (AB 1401) is intended to allow persons who continue coverage through federal COBRA to maintain their coverage for a maximum of 36 months in all cases.

The provisions in AB 1401 that extends continuation coverage to 36 months will affect our employees who elect federal COBRA on or after January 1, 2003. To illustrate, employees who terminate employment (or retire) and elect COBRA are eligible for continuation coverage for up to 18 months at 102% of the premium for covered employees. If they elect the additional continuation mandated by AB 1401, they may remain covered for an additional 18 months at 110% of the employee rate. The additional 18 months only applies to health insurance. Dental and vision coverage's are not extended under AB 1401.



One important thing to note is that AB 1401 does not amend federal COBRA. Disability extensions and second qualifying events are still factors.

Another provision in AB 1401 stipulates that any conversion plans offered to employees who terminate after September 1, 2003 must be one of the carrier's HIPAA Guaranteed Issue individual plans. Qualified applicants must make written application and initial premium payment within 63 days of termination of their group coverage, rather than 31 days.

If you should have any questions about COBRA coverage, you may either call your health plan's customer service or Stanislaus County's Employee Benefits Unit at (209) 525-5715.

Home Garden Pesticide Safety

Submitted by: Nancy Robinson, Safety Representative, Auditor-Controller's Office

As we start spring and approach summer many of us will be working in our gardens. It seems to be appropriate to discuss some issues relating to the proper use of garden chemicals and safety precautions.

Before you spray – Do you really need to use a pesticide? Low numbers of garden insects, if they can be tolerated, often help build up numbers of beneficial insects.

Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodent poisons and some other kinds of poisons. They also include insect repellents and disinfectants, such as bleach.

Keep pesticides and other household chemicals out of the reach of children and pets. Keep children and pets away from treated areas.

Read the label – and follow directions exactly

- Safe pesticide use begins with reading the label before you purchase the chemical, before use and before storing.
- The label lists the hazards of using the product. It also lists the precautions to take when using the product.

Note Signal Words – CAUTION, WARNING, or DANGER.

- Signal words do not indicate the potential for environmental harm.

Wear Protective Equipment and Clothing –

- Wear long pants, long sleeve shirt, shoes and socks, a hat and rubber gloves (not latex household type).
- Don't wear anything leather as it absorbs the chemical and cannot be decontaminated.
- Glasses for correcting vision and sunglasses do not count as eye protection.

Mixing Pesticides – Be especially careful when you are mixing pesticides.

ing pesticides.

- Concentrated products can be very dangerous.
- Do not leave open containers unattended.
- Keep a separate set of tools (measuring spoons or bowls) for mixing and applying.
- Mix only what you will use and use it all. Don't store mixed chemicals.
- Use cat litter or sawdust for cleaning up spills.
- Do not wash spills down with water.
- Bleach can neutralize many chemicals.
- Dispose of cleanup material properly.
- Be sure to wash hands and any exposed skin immediately.

Applying Pesticides –

- Use pesticides only in the places and for the uses stated on the label.
- Use only the amounts and frequency stated on the label.
- Do not apply pesticides when it is windy.
- Do not eat, or drink when you are applying pesticides.
- Shower immediately after applying pesticides.

Storing and disposing of Pesticides –

- Store in a locked place and separately from paint, solvents and fuels.
- Write date you opened the container on the container.
- Never put pesticides or other chemicals in other or unmarked containers.
- Dispose of empty container as directed on the label.

Remember to **read** and **follow** label **directions**. From the time you open the pesticide container until you properly dispose of the empty container, you are responsible for protecting yourself, others and the environment. (Information provided by Ed Perry - U.C. Cooperative Extension - Stanislaus County.)

Budget vs. Safety

By: David Becker, Safety Officer

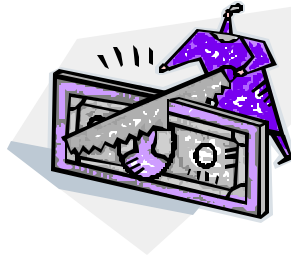
The other day I was sitting in my office looking at budgetary issues in the CEO-Risk Management, Safety Unit. During this review I happened to read a bulletin that I received. I noticed that there were several articles regarding people delegating responsibility when pressed for time and/or employees who, being pressed for time, took shortcuts. With these two issues in mind let's see if we can learn from other peoples experiences.

1. Employees were working on an elevated platform and had been doing a good job while the supervisor was present and monitoring the process. Because the supervisor had many more things to do he decided to delegate the responsibility of safety to another employee. When the supervisor left the job site and the employee took over the employees were less diligent in their adherence to the safety rules and regulations. The employee who was delegated did make sure no one was hurt but apparently overlooked some of the small infractions that the crew was committing. At that time entered an OSHA inspector who noticed that there were some errors being made on the job. The OSHA inspector came up and asked the workers a few questions regarding their process. One of the things that he noted is that there was no supervisor at the job site to make sure that everything is being done properly. The OSHA inspector noted this issue via a citation.

The company appealed the citation, but the most important thing to look at, is that in the absence of a supervisor, errors were made. Errors sometimes have tragic results and we don't want an OSHA citation or tragic event to occur here.

2. Two men working together were doing some elevated work by using a forklift as opposed to a man lift. By having the forklift the actual driver of the rig is on the ground not in the basket. While the crew was doing this job they decided to take a break. Normally you would lower the worker to the ground and the worker would exit the forklift at ground level. The two employees decided to drop the elevated employee off on the overpass. In doing so the person on the ground drove the forklift up to the elevated platform/overpass to drop the employee off. During this process he misjudged the distance. Unfortunately, he crushed the elevated employee to death. Rules and regulations in regards to bringing workers close to elevated platforms are pretty explicit. In this instance two people took a shortcut and in doing so the worker died. It may have saved time if it would have worked, but was the risk really worth it? In Stanislaus County we don't think so.
3. A forklift driver was loading an 18-wheeler. In doing so the driver of the 18-wheeler decided he was going to move

his rig. He pounded on the side of the vehicle and indicated he was going to move the vehicle, listened and did not hear anything. Then he jumped in the rig and pulled it forward. When he pulled the rig forward, the forklift that was inside was ejected out the rear door, the operator died upon impact. Again the driver was seeking to save time by not having to walk to the rear of the rig and actually visually check to make sure that no one was there. In doing so he violated company rules and Title 8 regulations, he also unfortunately cost another person his life.



4. This article has to do with a fall. Workers again were working on an elevated platform and while doing so had put a piece of wood over an opening in the elevated platform. This opening was used to get equipment and other supplies up to the elevated surface. Once that process had been completed the hole should have been appropriately closed, but that did not happen. On the day in question the workers were sent up to pick up the scraps of material on the elevated platform. One worker picked up the piece of wood covering the hole without notice. After he moved a short distance another employee, who was carrying an armful of material, stepped right into the hole, falling to his death. By saving time and not putting a proper handrail, kickboard and/or by not securing that piece of wood down and painting it with warnings as to what it was doing there undoubtedly did save a few minutes during the project. However I think we can see from the outcome that the time saved did not measure up to the loss which the organization suffered.

Now you may read these and say what tragedies and it would not happen to us but how many times have we, to save time, grabbed a kitchen chair and jumped on it to get something off the top shelf? How many times have we heard our parents and possibly as parents told our children not to do these things? We are saving time, it is faster, it is more convenient, there is a budget crunch. In California everything must move faster, and we are going to have to try to get more done with less. All those statements may make sense but when you fall off the chair and break your arm, will the time that you saved really benefit your family or our organization? If you already knew you were going to fall off the chair I'm sure you wouldn't have done it. As in all of these stories, above, if the people involved knew the actual cost of their errors I'm sure they would have made a different decision. At least in the first example the only thing they received was an OSHA citation, in the other examples workers died. As the budget crisis continues, and possibly even gets worse, we as supervisors, managers, employees, have to remain vigilant to make sure that we are not taking a shortcut which could put life at risk.



STANISLAUS COUNTY
CEO-RISK MANAGEMENT DIVISION

1010 10th Street, Suite 5900
P.O. Box 1723
Modesto, CA 95353
Phone: 209-525-5710
Fax: 209-525-5779

- A fly can react to something it sees and change direction in 30 milliseconds (.00003 seconds).
- Americans eat 18 acres of pizza every day.
- Aphids are born pregnant.
- The hummingbird is the only bird that can fly backwards.

What Are Customers Really Saying?

Submitted by: Mary Schortner, Disability Coordinator

When customers come into your agency, they obviously need you to provide a service for them. Beneath the surface, however, there are a whole set of unspoken needs that they also want met but never vocalize.

For example, when a customer comes into CSA, he might say "I need to pick up my food stamps for this month," but more than likely, he won't add, "and can you be quick, friendly and polite while you are doing that?"

According to **Gary Morck**, manager of administrative services for the **California Health and Human Services Agency** there are at least eight unspoken needs that customers have and each one carries with it a specific meaning in their minds:

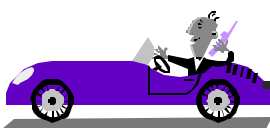
1. **Listen to me.** *What it really means:* Pay attention, understand me and hear what I say.
2. **Dependable service.** *Translation:* I need to know I can rely on you.

3. **Accurate information.** *The customer's version:* Don't guess at the right answer. If you don't know or have to check, I understand – but don't misinform me.
4. **Don't transfer me incessantly.** *Interpretation:* Connect me with the right person the first time. Don't shuffle me around. Don't leave me on hold.
5. **Be consistent.** *What it really means:* Treat me like a customer all the time.
6. **Courteous service.** *Translation:* Appreciate my business.
7. **Action.** *The customer's version:* Be responsive and prompt.
8. **Communication.** *Interpretation:* Keep me informed. Tell me what you're doing to resolve my need.

Source: "Putting Customer Feedback Into Action", a presentation given by Gary Morck at the 1999 Measuring and Improving Customer Satisfaction in Government Agencies.

Study: Cell Phones Cause 'Blindness' in Drivers

Submitted by: David Becker, Safety Officer



This is from a recent article in the National Safety Council, [Safety & Health Magazine](#) March 2003 issues. Thanks to Juan Varquez, HQ AFMC/SEG for forwarding it.

WASHINGTON - Legislation that mandates drivers use hands-free devices when talking on a cell phone may be missing the point. Researchers at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, report that using a cell phone leads to what they called "inattention blindness," or the inability to recognize objects encountered along the road. This could result in anything from slow reaction time when a light changes to causing a rear end collision. Using a hands-free device did not reduce this distraction, leading researchers to conclude that banning hand-held devices while permitting hands-free devices would not likely reduce driver distraction.

This study "underscores once again that a driver's primary obligation is to give his or her full attention to operating the motor vehicle safely, Alan C. McMillan, president and CEO of the National Safety Council, said in a statement.

The findings add to a series of studies that point to problems with cell phones and driving. Most recently, researchers at

the University of Sydney found that hands-free devices gave drivers a false sense of security. (Their article was in the Safety & Health, December Issue).

The Utah study, "Cell Phone Use Can Lead to Inattention Blindness Behind the Wheel," was originally published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology Applied.

STUDY SHOWS HANDS-FREE CELL PHONE USE IS EQUALLY HAZARDOUS

Using hands-free or hand-held cell phones impair driving ability equally, according to University of Utah researchers.

Talking on a hands-free cell phone reduced the amount of visual information drivers processed by about 50 percent, according to the study, published in the March issue of the Journal of Psychology: Applied.

"Inattention blindness": slows a driver's response time and attention, increasing the risk of accidents, say researchers.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends pulling off the road if you need to talk on any type of cell phone.