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**ICCFA MAGAZINE
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► The ICCFA offers a set of 10 training CDs developed by TechneTrain on various safety topics. For details or to order, visit www.iccfa.com/icfanews.htm, or call 1.800.645.7700.

**■ MORE FROM
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► DeCamp will talk about setting up a cost-effective training program at the ICCFA Annual Convention & Exposition, March 20-23, Las Vegas, Nevada. For more information about the convention, see the program beginning on page XX, call 1.800.645.7700 or go to www.iccfa.com.

O C C U P A T I O N A L S A F E T Y : P A R T 1 O F 7

Making your property safe for employees and clients is both the right and prudent thing to do. How do you evaluate what you're doing? Start with this series of articles on creating a safety program.

The ABCs of creating a workplace safety program

In funeral homes, safety issues that must be addressed include personal protective equipment, including respirators; chemical exposure; formaldehyde; bloodborne pathogens; and ergonomics.

For cemeteries, chemical exposure, ergonomics and personal protective equipment are also critical, as are machine guarding and lawnmower safety, noise exposure, flammable materials and outdoor work hazards (pollen, dust, insects, heat and cold stress.)

Obviously these factors will vary from one location to another. You may have many more or different safety issues in your own business. In this series of articles, we will focus on OSHA safety programs for dealing with some of the hazards common to cemeteries and funeral homes.

Why do you need a safety program?

There are three big reasons your business needs a safety program:

- to protect your employees;
- to protect the bottom line for your business; and
- to meet your legal (OSHA) obligations.

Protecting your employees. Employers who implement successful safety and health programs can expect to reduce injuries and illnesses. The primary goal of a work safety program is to protect your employees from hardship caused by workplace mishaps.

Every injury prevented is a person kept whole and healthy; every life saved is a family preserved intact. Families suffer because of the increased stress, conflict and even divorce sometimes associated with occupational injury and illness. Workers who suffer a disabling injury can lose 40 percent of their income over five years.

Protecting the bottom line for your business. A successful safety program is a key to having not only healthy and competent workers, but also a healthy, successful business. Businesses spend \$170 billion a year on costs associated with occupational illnesses and injuries. Injury costs take away from profits and can be as much as 5 percent of a company's budget.

In a family-based or small business, that 5 percent may come directly out of your salary.

Every injury prevented saves your company money. Even one serious workplace injury may affect the bottom line of a small business.

There are both direct and indirect costs associated with occupational illnesses and injuries. Direct costs include workers' compensation payments, medical expenses, repair of damaged equipment and property, costs for legal services, overtime and/or lost work, hiring of temporary help and OSHA citations.

Indirect costs include training replacement employees, accident investigation and implementation of corrective measures, lost productivity, decreased employee morale and increased absenteeism, and work delays, which can affect customer goodwill. In a profession where it is your goal to provide comfort and security at a time of loss, the notoriety of an incident or an OSHA citation could also result in a significant loss of business.

Workplaces that establish safety and health management systems reduce their injury and illness costs by 20 to 40 percent. In today's business environment, these costs can be the difference between operating in the black and running in the red.

Workplaces with active safety and health leadership have fewer injuries, and have more satisfied, productive employees. These employees return to work more quickly after an injury or illness and produce higher quality products and services.

An added benefit is that when making the changes needed to improve workplace safety and health, employers often find ways to make significant improvements in their organization's productivity and profitability.

Meeting your legal (OSHA) obligation. A successful safety program not only helps your employees and your financial well-being, it is also your legal obligation as an employer under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

This series of articles will help you understand what OSHA requires you to do, and provide you with

Developing a safety program may seem like a daunting and expensive task for your business, but it is essential and is money well spent. Studies have shown a \$4 to \$6 return for every dollar invested in workplace safety and health.

helpful “how to” steps for developing and implementing successful safety programs.

What is a safety program?

A safety program consists of three primary components. They are:

- hazard assessment;
- hazard control; and
- training.

Hazard assessment. Simply put, a workplace hazard is any condition or procedure that has the potential to cause harm. If employees are to be protected from workplace hazards, those hazards need to be identified.

OSHA requires that all employers develop a means of systematically identifying workplace hazards so they can be managed before accidents occur. Each program is specific to the tasks performed at that business. Hazard assessment is also called worksite analysis.

You may identify workplace hazards through a combination of several means. A periodic comprehensive industrial hygiene analysis is recommended whenever feasible. Your own analysis of accident records, reports of near-misses and employee reports of hazards or at-risk behaviors is a great place to start to determine where you need to focus your attention first. Finally, job or process hazard analysis should be done for your workplace on a routine basis.

Hazard control. The goal of a hazard control program is to make the workplace “accident-proof.” OSHA has a consistent approach to how you need to manage occupational hazards. There is a specific hierarchy that should be followed as a “filter down” technique.

After carefully analyzing your work tasks, you first eliminate all unsafe conditions or procedures that are not essential to the work to be performed, or substitute with less hazardous materials/procedures whenever possible. Then, you must implement the following:

- engineering controls;
 - safe work practices;
 - PPE (personal protective equipment);
- and
- an emergency and first aid plan.

Engineering controls. Engineering controls are another way to manage hazard exposure. This could include redesigning work stations, enclosing dangerous machine parts, adding ventilation systems to ensure healthy air supply when working with chemicals and the use of sharps containers. Other examples: isolating noisy equipment, using rubber insulation and using lift-assist equipment.

OSHA requires that each employer implement all feasible engineering controls to eliminate or reduce hazards.

Safe work practices. Work practices are the methods and procedures used to perform tasks. You must develop safe work practices for all tasks that involve hazards. The more complicated the task, the greater the need for established safe procedures.

Some of these procedures must be in writing. One example is the handling of infectious materials. Procedures should include any administrative controls, such as lengthened rest breaks or job rotation to reduce stress or repetitive motion of one part of the body.

PPE (personal protective equipment). When exposure to hazards cannot be completely eliminated through safe work practices and engineering controls, you must provide adequate protective clothing and equipment at no cost to each employee and ensure that it is properly maintained. This may include gloves, gowns, goggles, hearing protection, face shields, steel-toed shoes, respirators and hard hats, depending on where an individual works and what tasks he/she performs.

Emergency and first aid plan. You must also have an emergency and first aid plan in case an accident or exposure occurs. This may include quick drench showers and eye-wash stations.

Training. Training is the backbone of any safety program. A safety program is of little value if employees do not understand or abide by it. Each employee must be trained on where the hazards are (hazard assessment), and what you have selected for hazard control for his or her job. Each employee:

- must be informed of the purpose and function of engineering controls, and be

able to identify when they are damaged, missing or otherwise ineffective;

- must understand safe work practices;
- must be trained on the purpose, selection, fit, maintenance and use of any PPE required for his or her job; and
- must be trained on the emergency and first aid plans.

How do you develop a cost-effective safety training program?

First of all, when talking about a safety program, it is important to remember that safety is a process and a culture, not a static or one-time event. It is estimated that 40 percent of all job-related accidents can be prevented by the people who work in the area.

Therefore it is important to establish a culture where safety is everyone’s job and where employees understand how to prevent accidents in their work area, what to do if something seems out of place and whom to talk to about safety concerns. This culture is the catalyst to making your safety programs effective.

Specifically, what OSHA says you must do is:

- Identify all potential hazards at your work place.
- Inform your employees of their risks, and how you will manage them.
- Apply feasible engineering controls.
- Develop safe work practices.
- Provide the proper PPE to employees.
- Develop an emergency action plan, first aid plan and fire prevention plan.
- Train your employees on all of the above. OSHA has specific requirements about the content and frequency of training that is required. You must ensure that employees demonstrate competence on the job.

In future articles, we will talk about what is needed to establish OSHA safety programs for hazards common to the cemetery and funeral service profession. We will cover the following topics:

- PPE and respiratory protection (OSHA has recently issued a new standard);
- hazard communication (chemical exposure, including herbicides and pesticides);
- formaldehyde;
- bloodborne pathogens;
- ergonomics (manual lifting and working in awkward postures); and
- machine guarding (retorts, lawnmowers, maintenance equipment). □