

TIPS OF The Trade

What's OSHA Doing In The Surfacing Industry? Five Things To Watch Out For In Your Shop



By Shannon DeCamp • In October, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) published its citation information for the past year (October 2006 through September 2007). Now is a good time to

look at what OSHA has been focusing on in your industry, and to evaluate your own safety programs. Listed below are the top 5 citations:

1. Personal Protective Equipment
2. Hazard Communication
3. Materials Transport
4. General Environmental Safety
5. Electrical Safety

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE violations topped the list for OSHA citations this past year. Each employer must assess what protective equipment is necessary for each employee and task. OSHA found employers were not providing necessary equipment based on job hazards; not providing proper training; or not ensuring that employees wear the required equipment. Your PPE program must be in writing. Specifically, citations were issued, in order of frequency, on the following: respiratory protection, PPE – general requirements, eye and face protection, hand protection, foot protection and head protection.

Violations of the respiratory protection standard comprised nearly 75 percent of all PPE citations. OSHA revised its respiratory protection standard effective November 22, 2006, so it is important to review your program and ensure that you are in compliance with the new standard. OSHA and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have developed a rating system for respirators: the Assigned Protection Factor (APF). Another new term, Maximum Use Concentration (MUC), has also been incorporated into the revised OSHA Standard.

Fabricators may be required to use respirators to protect themselves from inhaling grit and dust, exposure that occurs when dry-cutting masonry or stone that contains silica, and exposure to chemicals released when sawing, routing, drilling or sanding synthetic sheet goods. It is also likely that your adhesives produce hazardous fumes. You must determine what your employee exposure is for each chemical produced or used in the workplace, and ensure that your respirator's protection level is adequate for the exposure level.

Hazard Communication

Employee exposure to hazardous and toxic substances was the second most frequently cited area this past year. The top violation was having an inadequate "Right-to-Know" program for employees. A hazard communication program that meets OSHA requirements includes the following: Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all chemicals; safe handling and storage procedures for each chemical; adequate PPE; quick drench showers and eye wash stations; and comprehensive

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training programs for employees. If you have more than 10 employees, your Hazard Communication Program must be in writing.

Materials Transport

Fork Trucks: Citations on OSHA's powered industrial truck (PIT) standard comprised 86 percent of the violations in this category. It is essential that employees have the training and knowledge to use material handling equipment and that your facility has established safe work procedures.

The majority of fork truck incidents can be attributed to lack of safe operating procedures, safety-rule enforcement, and insufficient or inadequate training. In addition to training, applying general safety principles, such as proper work practices, equipment and controls, can help to reduce such workplace incidents.

All personnel who work around forklifts must be trained on safe work practices. Operators must be trained on the type of truck they use and the working conditions encountered. Refresher training must be conducted at least every three years.

Cranes and Slings: Violations for cranes and slings made up the balance of citations in materials transport. Improper selection or use of slings can result in sling failure or load slippage, leading to injuries or death. OSHA has recently issued a new guidance document on the use of slings. The new document provides guidance on selection and use of slings, including newer grades of materials being used in alloy steel chain and wire rope slings.

General Environmental Safety

Noise: Occupational noise exposure was the most frequent citation in any category last year in the surfacing industry. OSHA requires employers to assess noise levels, and take action when acceptable limits are exceeded. First, engineering controls must be applied to reduce noise exposure. When these controls fail to reduce sound levels, the right hearing protectors must be provided. The employer must administer a continuing, effective hearing conservation program.

Ventilation: Inadequate ventilation was another environmental safety issue cited last year. Industrial ventilation generally involves the use of supply and exhaust ventilation to reduce airborne contaminants to acceptable levels. Your facility must have an effective system to manage exposure to hazardous dust or airborne contaminants. The employer must be aware of OSHA exposure limits for each chemical used or produced in the shop, and ensure that these limits are not exceeded. Ventilation systems are one effective way to minimize exposure.

Electrical Safety

Electrical hazards were another frequently cited area. An average of one worker dies from electrocution on the job every day. Even low voltage or low current can cause serious harm or death. Electric power-operated tools must either be of the approved double-insulated type, or grounded in accordance with OSHA regulations. Never use electric cords for hoisting

or lowering tools. OSHA issued a new general industry electrical standard that became effective on August 13, 2007 — the first update since 1981. Be sure that you are in compliance with this new standard. ■

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