

SAFETY BRIEF: SEASONAL EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

Seasonal employees may be hired to carry out a variety of tasks, from mowing grass to collecting trash to painting. Seasonal employees face the same workplace hazards as permanent employees, but safety training is often overlooked due to the short term of their employment. Seasonal employees are often younger and less experienced than permanent employees, so safety training should be a priority for these employees.

Everyone knows how to mow and paint, or do they? Never assume a new employee understands the job task assigned or the job's associated hazards. Training and evaluation is the only way employers can verify that seasonal employees have the knowledge and skills to do the job safely. One good way to train and supervise your inexperienced seasonal employee is to team them up with a skilled employee who can teach them how to do the job safely and provide feedback on their skill development. Safety procedures and training should be constantly reinforced through supervision, follow-up, and consequences.

New Employee Orientation

When a seasonal employee is hired, it is most important that training begins immediately. They will need to be educated on your policies and procedures, including the emergency action plan and how to report safety concerns, incidents, or accidents. Seasonal employees should be trained on the specific job function they will perform, including how to safely perform the job. These new and/or inexperienced workers should be given training on such topics as personal protective equipment, proper lifting, preventing slips and falls, and Hazard Communication.

PPE

Employers are responsible for providing each employee with appropriate, properly fitted personal protective equipment (PPE). Training must also be provided for any employee required to use PPE. Employers must evaluate the hazards faced by workers and identify the PPE needed for the tasks that they perform. Safety boots and hardhats should be worn in public works garages, on construction sites, and anywhere there is a potential for crushing or piercing injuries. Glasses, goggles, or face shields should be worn when performing any task where there is flying debris. Hand protection is needed to avoid cuts or punctures when handling abrasive or sharp objects, such as weeds and brush. Respiratory protection must be provided when the supply of fresh air is inadequate (teens may not work in any environment that requires more than a paper face mask). Employees are responsible for wearing appropriate attire for each task. Entangling injuries may result from accidents involving jewelry and/or loose clothing in close proximity to tools or machinery.

Safe Lifting

An estimated eight out of every ten people suffer a back injury during their lifetime. Back injuries can occur regardless of age simply by lifting in the wrong manner or improperly carrying a heavy load.



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The following steps identify the correct way to lift a load and reduce the chance of straining or spraining the back:

- 1) Size up the load—assess the load before lifting by slowly applying force against the object. Make sure the load is stable and balanced. If the load is too heavy, get help.
- 2) Plan the job. Choose the easiest route that is free of tripping and slipping hazards.
- 3) Set up a good base of support. Keep feet shoulder-width apart, and one foot slightly behind the other, to provide a stable lifting base.
- 4) Bend at the knees, not at the waist. Squat down as far as necessary using your legs, not your back.
- 5) Get a good grip. Grasp firmly, using both hands.
- 6) Keep the load close. Less force is exerted on your back if you keep the load close to your body with your back upright.
- 7) Keep your head up and your shoulders back, lifting with your legs. Use your strong calf and thigh muscles to lift, flexing at the knee and hip joints.
- 8) Pivot, don't twist. When changing directions, turn your entire body, pivoting on your feet.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

Every employee must be responsible for keeping his/her workplace safe from tripping and slipping hazards. It is simply a matter of good housekeeping. Some causes of slips, trips, and falls in the work area to watch for are as follows:

- objects left in walkways;
- falls from elevated position; and
- foreign substances on the floor like water, food, grease, oil, soap, and other debris.

Teach employees to take the following precautions to avoid slips, trips, and falls:

- clean footwear thoroughly before entering the building;
- use handrails provided with stairs and ramps;
- practice ladder safety;
- properly assemble and secure scaffolds;
- use toe boards to prevent tools from falling off scaffolding;
- tape down or remove extension cords in walkways;
- wear appropriate footwear for the jobsite; and
- report any equipment or supplies left in walkways.

Beware of Fatigue

Extended daylight hours and warm weather encourage many employers to extend work hours, which may cause fatigue. A longer workday is fine as long as there are appropriate breaks and attention to safety.

Restrictions on Young Workers

Employers must be aware of restrictions on young employees. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development has identified a list of hazardous occupations which cannot be



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performed by those under the age of 18. These restrictions are listed in the Summary of Alaska Child Labor Law at <http://labor.alaska.gov/lss/childlaw.htm>.

In conclusion, seasonal employees provide a much needed boost to productivity when they are trained to complete their work tasks properly and safely. Make sure that new and inexperienced employees receive adequate supervision to ensure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to do the job safely. Make sure that all new employees receive safety orientation and training before they begin work, and pair inexperienced employees with skilled, experienced employees whenever possible.

Online training is available at www.amljia.org. The AMLJIA Online University offers a variety of courses, including Safety Awareness for Seasonal Employees. All courses are offered at no charge to AMLJIA members!

