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Defensive Driving

Safety-conscious drivers prevent accidents

Defensive driving is driving to prevent accidents, in spite of the incorrect actions of others or adverse weather conditions. Drivers who are safety-conscious have developed good habits and practice them daily. And every time they get behind the wheel, they remember these important points:

- **Keep alert and focus on your driving.** Keep your mind free of distractions and concentrate on the road. Road hazards can pop up in a split second, and you may not catch them if you're fiddling with the radio, talking on your car phone, scanning the newspaper headlines, or putting on makeup in the rearview mirror.
- **Obey all traffic laws.** Pay attention to changing speed limits and other posted warnings. Make a full stop at stop signs. And remember, a yellow light means slow down and prepare to stop, not speed up and try to beat the red light.
- **Be courteous to others.** Give other drivers a break. Road rage leads to accidents. Defensive drivers take it easy and get home safely.
- **Adjust your driving to suit weather conditions.** Driving on wet or slippery surfaces is not the same as driving on dry surfaces. When the weather is bad, slow down and adjust your driving time and habits to the road conditions.
- **Stay a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you.** One vehicle length for each 10 mph is the standard rule. This will give you time to apply your brakes gradually so that you don't go into a spin or grind to a stop so quickly that the guy in back of you runs into you.
- **Anticipate traffic problems.** Defensive drivers constantly scan the road and look for potential problems—for example, curbside vehicles pulling out into traffic without warning, drivers running stop signs and red lights, unexpected stops and turns by other drivers, drivers changing lanes without signaling.

When you get behind the wheel of any vehicle, remember that defensive driving is a full-time job. The most dangerous mile you have to drive is the one directly ahead of you.

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PROTECT YOUR HEARING

Noise is measured in two ways—loudness and pitch (or frequency). Loudness is measured in decibels (dB). Pitch is measured in hertz (Hz).

- You run the risk of hearing loss if you are exposed to an average of more than 90 dB over an 8-hour work day and do not wear hearing protection.
- High-pitched, shrill noises are more likely to harm your hearing than low-pitched noises.
- Noise that is both loud *and* high-pitched has the worst effect on hearing.

People don't "adjust" to harmful noise—they lose their hearing. That's why it's so important to always wear required hearing protection on the job.

TEST BEFORE YOU ENTER!

Before you enter any confined space, make sure your employer tests the levels of oxygen, combustibility, and toxicity in the space. You have the right to view the testing procedures and results.

All levels of the space must be tested, not just the middle. Light gases, such as methane, will rise to the ceiling. Heavy gases, such as propane, will travel along the floor. Some may accumulate in a corner where there's a leak in a pipe or duct.

If tests reveal a hazard, ventilate the space and test again. Respirators are critical for spaces that cannot be ventilated. And, remember to test the instruments themselves regularly, to make sure they're working right.

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A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, AND A LITTLE BIT OF THAT

Each day the average person consumes between 1500 and 2400 calories, depending on height, body frame, and activity level. You may need more calories if your work is extremely strenuous or you work out a lot.

But whatever your daily calorie intake, here's how those calories should be divided:

- **50% to 60% carbohydrates**
(pasta, rice, grains, fruits, vegetables)
- **15% protein**
(meat, poultry, fish, dairy, beans)
- **30% or less fat**
(dairy, meat, oil)

THE SHOCKING TRUTH

Electricity must have an uninterrupted path, or circuit, to follow. If your body becomes a part of that circuit, electricity will pass through it. Even "household" voltage (110-120) can produce enough electrical energy to kill you—especially if the electricity passes through vital organs, such as the heart or lungs.

Electricity always follows the path of least resistance, so it's important to provide an easy path for the current to follow. This is called a *ground*. Always make sure electrical equipment is properly grounded before you turn it on.

When to Fight or Run

Know when and how to use a fire extinguisher

Fire extinguishers can be helpful if used properly and wisely. But remember that they are no substitute for getting trained fire fighters on the scene as quickly as possible.

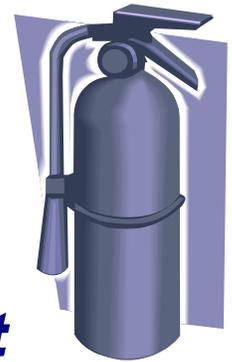
Also remember these important points:

- **Do not attempt to fight a large fire with an extinguisher.** Get out of the building immediately and call for help.
- **Most extinguishers are emptied in less than a minute.** Unless the fire is small and contained, an extinguisher may quickly prove ineffective.
- **Always leave yourself a way out.** Keep your back to a safe exit. If you can't put the fire out right away and it starts to spread, evacuate the building immediately.

Keeping these precautions in mind, the most effective way to use an extinguisher is the PASS technique:

Standing 6 to 8 feet from the fire . . .

- **P**ull the pin.
- **A**im the hose at the base of the fire.
- **S**queeze the trigger.
- **S**weep back and forth with the extinguisher.



Beat the Night Shift Blues

How to cope with special demands of shift work

The number one reason for night shift work safety problems is fatigue. It's hard to keep to a different time schedule that is the opposite of what your body naturally wants to do. Here are some suggestions to help you sleep better during the day so that you can be at peak alertness during the night:

- **Keep a regular bedtime schedule.** Try to go to sleep at around the same time every day and as soon after work as possible.

- **Keep your bedroom dark and quiet.** Room-darkening shades or blinds will help keep out light. Ask other household members to cooperate by keeping down noise or use a fan to mask noise.

- **Eat three balanced meals each day.** Avoid rich or spicy food before bedtime.

- **Get regular exercise.** But don't exercise just before going to bed—this will have the opposite effect and wake you up.

- **Don't smoke or drink alcohol before bedtime.** Alcohol disturbs sleep patterns. Nicotine is a stimulant that tends to keep you awake. Also stay away from caffeine for at least four hours prior to sleep.

- **Get enough sleep.** If you experience frequent trouble falling or staying asleep, see your physician. Use sleeping pills as a last resort, and only when prescribed by your doctor.

Don't Let Safety Slip Away

Prevent dangerous slip-ups by taking precautions

It's all too easy to slip on wet or smooth surfaces. Floors and stairs that are waxed or polished, or made of tile, marble, or other smooth materials can be hazardous. And adding a little water, ice, oil, grease, or chemical spill can create downright dangerous conditions. Remember the following tips to help prevent slips and falls—and painful injuries—in your work area:

- Clean up spills, drips, and leaks immediately.
- Put up signs or barriers to keep people away from temporary slip hazards.
- Wear shoes with anti-skid soles. Ask your supervisor about the right shoes for your job.
- Avoid turning sharply when you walk on a slippery surface.
- Keep your hands at your sides—not in your pockets.
- Walk slowly and slide your feet on wet, slippery, or uneven surfaces.
- Sand oily or icy spots immediately—and tread carefully.
- Report slipping hazards when you see them—don't count on the other guy to do it.

Most important, be careful. Take your time and look where you're going. Don't let something as routine as walking put you in the hospital.



Down The Drain!

Put household hazardous waste in its place

Many of the products we use every day are hazardous—for example: detergents, cleaning fluids, paints, bleaches, drain cleaners, furniture polishes, insecticides, and certain cosmetics.

In low quantities, these household "necessities" are relatively harmless. But the combined build up of hazardous wastes can become a serious threat to the environment.

Follow any specific instructions for the safe disposal of household hazardous wastes. Some wastes, such as used motor oil, must be transported to special disposal sites. Find out about periodic hazardous waste collections or disposal sites in your community. In addition, keep these "don'ts" in mind:

- **Don't** burn products that contain hazardous chemicals.
- **Don't** mix chemicals together.
- **Don't** pour chemical products out on the ground, in the street, or down storm drains.
- **Don't** bury hazardous leftover household products.
- **Don't** pour wastes down the drain or into the toilet.

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BEFORE YOU START A JOB, CHECK THE MSDS

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) give you the information you need to work safely with chemicals.

An MSDS will tell you the following facts:

- Identity of the hazardous ingredients, its chemical ID, and common names.
- Hazards and health effects, such as signs and symptoms of exposure and how the chemical could enter the body.
- Safety procedures and equipment that will protect you, such as first aid for exposure.

Always check the MSDS if you have any questions about working safely with a particular chemical.

LIFTING TECHNIQUES FOR BAGS AND SACKS

Bags and sacks are awkward items to lift and carry, and as a result, many people handle them improperly and risk injury.

Here's the safe way to lift and carry bags and sacks:

- Assume the safe lifting position.
- Grasp the load at opposite top and bottom corners.
- Power your body up with your legs and use your arms to raise the load to rest on your hip.
- Fully stand and move the load to rest on your shoulder.

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ARE YOU PREPARED TO EVACUATE?

Would you know what to do if an emergency situation like a fire, explosion, or natural disaster hit your workplace? One of the most important things you'll need to know in any emergency is how to evacuate safely.

- **Know your assigned evacuation route.** Check the escape plans posted around the facility which direct you to the nearest exits.
- **Know alternate escape routes** in case you are not able to reach or use your assigned exit.
- **Pay attention during evacuation drills.** Know how to exit safely even if there's blinding smoke or no lights.

HANDLING ITEMS IN HIGH PLACES

Getting a box down from a high shelf may not seem like a safety issue, but if you don't take care, you could end up with a sore back or some other injury. Here's how to move things *safely* from high places:

- Use a stool or platform instead of a ladder.
- Push up on the load to check how heavy and stable it is.
- See if you can break it down into smaller pieces.

Look Out Below!

And watch out above to prevent falling objects

Objects falling from above and striking people below cause some of the most serious workplace injuries and account for a number of deaths every year. That's why protective headgear is required for people working below.

But hard hats are only half the battle. The other important part is preventing objects from falling and accidents from happening in the first place.

Here are some precautions to take if you're working at a height:

- Warn co-workers below that you're about to begin an overhead job by posting signs or roping off the area below.
- Don't carry tools or materials up a ladder. Use a hand winch line, containers, or a bucket lifted by a line.
- Make sure scaffolding and platforms are provided with toe boards so objects can't fall off.
- Keep tools and materials away from the edges of platforms and ladders and off railings or window sills.
- Never throw materials or tools.
- Don't stick tools in your pockets. When you bend over they might fall out.

Home Eye Safety

Take the time to save your precious sight

According to the nonprofit organization Prevent Blindness America (Schaumburg, IL), more than 200,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for eye injuries. More than half of these incidents occurred while working around the home or having fun with recreational activities. Yet, 90 percent of these eye injuries could have been prevented through the use of proper eye protection.

If you're one of those people who wears eye protection at work because you have to but doesn't bother with it at home, here are some tips from Prevent Blindness America to help keep your eyes safe at home:

- Use safety glasses with side shields for general protection.
- Wear goggles or goggles with a face shield when using chemicals, pesticides, or fertilizers.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions and warning labels.
- Use products that are safe to use and easy to dispose of.
- Keep work areas clean and free of clutter.
- Use proper guards on power equipment.

