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Risk services

Workplace safety update

September 2026

Carbon Monoxide: The Invisible Danger

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas that can cause serious illness or death. Because it cannot be seen or smelled, people may not realize they are being exposed until symptoms appear.

CO is created when fuels such as gasoline, propane, natural gas, coal, or wood do not burn completely. Common sources include furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, space heaters, gas appliances, vehicles, and forklifts. Dangerous levels can build up when equipment is improperly maintained or ventilation is inadequate.



Know the symptoms of CO poisoning:

- Headache
- Dizziness or vertigo
- Nausea
- Weakness or fatigue
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Sleepiness
- Chest pain (especially for those with heart conditions)

These symptoms can resemble the flu, making CO poisoning difficult to recognize. If you suspect exposure, move to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention.

Certain factors can increase the risk of serious effects, including heart disease, asthma, bronchitis, smoking, alcohol use, high altitude, and hot working conditions.

Prevention Tips

- ✓ Service furnaces and other fuel-burning equipment regularly.
- ✓ Ensure all appliances are properly vented outdoors. Check vents regularly for blockages.
- ✓ Install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors. Inspect vehicles for exhaust leaks.
- ✓ Never run a vehicle in a garage or other enclosed area, even briefly.
- ✓ Be extra cautious in tightly sealed, energy-efficient buildings where ventilation may be limited.

Safety Reminder

CO is invisible, but its sources are not. Regular inspections, proper maintenance and working CO detectors can help protect you, your coworkers and your family from this silent hazard.

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National Concussion Awareness Day: Prevent Falls, Protect Your Brain

Each year, National Concussion Awareness Day raises awareness about concussions and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). While many people associate concussions with sports, they are also a serious workplace hazard. Falls, particularly from ladders, are among the leading causes of work-related head injuries and can have life-changing consequences.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), falls are the leading cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and account for nearly half of all TBI-related hospitalizations in the United States. Falls also remain one of the most serious workplace hazards. In 2023, 885 workers lost their lives in slip, trip, and fall incidents, making falls one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities.

The construction industry experienced 1,075 workplace fatalities in 2023, with falls, slips, and trips accounting for nearly 40% of those deaths. Construction also represented almost half of all fatal falls across all industries. **Most fatal falls occurred from heights between 6 and 30 feet**, a distance commonly associated with ladders, roofs, and elevated work surfaces. A fall from a ladder can result in a concussion or other traumatic brain injury, with symptoms that may last for days, weeks, or even months.

A concussion occurs when a bump, blow, or sudden jolt causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Symptoms may include headaches, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, confusion, sensitivity to light or noise, and difficulty concentrating. These symptoms may not appear immediately, so any worker who experiences a fall or blow to the head should report the incident and seek medical evaluation promptly.

The best way to prevent a concussion is to prevent falls before they happen. Remember these key safety practices:





Remember: *Most concussions caused by falls are preventable. Taking a few extra moments to follow safe work practices can help protect you from serious injury and keep everyone on the job safe.*

RISK REFLECTIONS

Workplace Safety: Concussions Don’t Always Happen on the Playing Field

By Wayne Flees, Risk Services Safety-Ergo Consultant



September 18 is Concussion Awareness Day, a day dedicated to increasing understanding of concussions and their impact on everyday life. The observance was founded in 2016 by Brooke Mills after she experienced a concussion as a freshman in high school. Her injury occurred during a gym class, a reminder that concussions can happen to anyone, anywhere.

I can relate.

About twenty years ago, I suffered a concussion after a fall on a ski hill. On my last run of the day, I landed hard on my head. Helmets were not commonly worn at the time. I was able to ski back to the parking lot, say goodbye to my friends, and start driving home. A few miles later, however, I became increasingly confused. In an area I knew well, I could no longer remember where I was going. I pulled into a gas station and began wandering the parking lot. Concerned bystanders stopped to help and asked simple questions about the president’s name, the year, and other basic facts that I should have known, but couldn't answer. The night ended in the emergency room, followed by several days of rest and recovery.

Looking back, what stands out most is how quickly a concussion can affect judgment and awareness. At first, I thought I was fine. I was able to get up, ski down the hill, say goodbye to my friends, and start driving home. It wasn't until later, when I became confused and could no longer remember where I was going, that the seriousness of the injury became clear. That experience taught me that the effects of a head injury are not always immediate or obvious.

Concussion Awareness Day is a reminder that some of the most significant injuries are the ones we cannot see.
A concussion can affect daily activities, decision-making, and overall well-being long after the initial incident. Whether at work or away from it, taking head injuries seriously and seeking medical attention when something doesn't feel right can make a meaningful difference in recovery. Most importantly, we should continue looking out for one another and supporting those who are healing from an injury.

National Concussion Awareness Day ®

National Concussion Awareness Day promotes education, awareness and support for individuals affected by concussions and other brain injuries.

Learn more at nationalconcussionawarenessday.com

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OSHA Corner

Construction Suicide Prevention Week

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates. The Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention estimates there are 10 to 12 suicides among construction workers every day. This startling statistic means mental health must be considered a health and safety priority.

Each September, experts come together during National Suicide Prevention Month to raise awareness about the unique stresses construction workers face and to save lives during Construction Suicide Prevention Week (CSPW). From **September 14 to 18, 2026**, CSPW partners will be "building on progress," this year's theme. Even though suicide deaths in construction have begun to decline, there's still work to do.

OSHA encourages everyone in the construction industry to help prevent suicide by following these key steps:

- ☑ **Pay attention**.
  Warning signs of suicide should be taken seriously. You may notice changes in a coworker's behavior, mood, or communication.

- ☑ **Reach out**.
  If you have concerns about a coworker, privately and compassionately ask them if they're OK. Remember to remind them that there are resources available, including the HR department and mental health professionals.

- ☑ **Create a welcoming culture**.
  Construction companies need to address suicide prevention directly by providing employee training and normalizing conversations about mental health.

- ☑ **Learn more**.
  Find resources and read more about suicide risk factors. Some helpful websites include the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention, and OSHA.

STAND UP FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

This September, take the CSPW pledge and make a commitment to check in with your coworkers on a regular basis. The construction industry can be dangerous and fast-paced, but together, we can save lives.

Pledge to stand up