



The Connecticut Occupational Health e-News is published quarterly by the Connecticut Department of Public Health to provide occupational health surveillance and educational information to workers, employers, clinicians, and other community partners interested in the protection and promotion of healthy work environments.

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Keeping Connecticut Healthy

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J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H.,
Commissioner

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A CONNECTICUT WORKER TIME CAPSULE



Hat Making

Women stacking dried carrotted rabbit pelts
Connecticut, September 1941

Before mercury was banned from the hat industry, workers
were exposed to mercury in each step of the hat-making process.

NEW STUDY REVEALS INDOOR HAZARD OF WATER-DAMAGED BUILDINGS

NIOSH scientists and an outside colleague found that water-damaged facilities had a higher prevalence of asthma and other respiratory symptoms than expected. This research introduced more evidence that water damage contributing to mold and other microbial growth can negatively affect employees' respiratory health and business productivity. The study is part of NIOSH's ongoing research program to improve the understanding of indoor environmental quality, prevent building-related illnesses, and provide practical guidance for maintaining healthy buildings. The study, "Respiratory Morbidity in Office Workers in a Water-Damaged Building," was published in the April 2005 issue of the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*. It is available online at <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/members/2005/7559/7559.html>.



More information on indoor environmental quality research at NIOSH is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/indoorenv>.

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFETY" CAPTURES LESSONS FROM A STATE TEAM APPROACH TO YOUNG WORKER SAFETY

As the result of a cooperative agreement with NIOSH, the Education Development Center in Newton, MA spent three years working with New England states to pilot test a state team approach to addressing young worker issues through information and education activities. The experiences of those state teams are captured in a new NIOSH booklet, "Working Together for Safety." Case studies are included from New Hampshire and Connecticut that document creative collaborations among state agencies. The booklet features strategies for increasing the awareness of teens, educators, parents, employers, and health care providers. It is available for download at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2005-134>.

SOLVENT EXPOSURE IN DRYCLEANING INDUSTRY PROMPTS NEW OSHA PUBLICATION



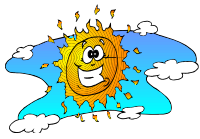
The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently published new guidance to reduce worker exposure to organic chemical solvents used in the dry cleaning industry. *Reducing Worker Exposures to Perchloroethylene in Dry-Cleaning* provides information on the health hazards and current regulations related to the solvent, and addresses best practices to minimize worker exposure. The document can be found at <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/perc.html>.

TWO WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS PUBLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE IN SPANISH

Two previously published NIOSH Workplace Solutions Publications are now available for download in Spanish, in addition to the English versions.

Workplace Solutions: Ground Fall Injuries in Underground Stone Mines <http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/niosh/docs/2004-106sp.html>

Workplace Solutions: Divers Beware: Training Dives Present Serious Hazards to Fire Fighters <http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/niosh/docs/2004-152sp.html>



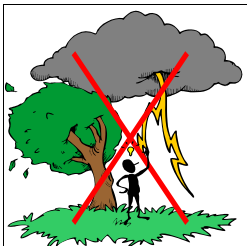
Severe Weather Safety



Severe weather comes in many forms, and during the summer months heat and lightning are just some of the weather extremes you may be faced with while working outdoors. Lightning each year kills more people than tornadoes, and according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, a worker in the US is killed on average every 23 days by lightning and many more are severely injured. Being able to identify changing weather conditions, and working quickly to get out of nature's path, can reduce your chance of facing a weather-related illness or injury.

The following safety tips can help you to avoid severe weather illnesses and injuries:

- Use extreme caution while working on hot days! Heat combined with high humidity sets the stage for heat exhaustion, and dehydration. Remember to drink plenty of fluids to replenish the fluids that are lost while working.
- When working outside watch for changing environmental conditions, such as increasing wind, flashes of lightning, sounds of thunder, darkening skies, and increasing AM radio static. Seek shelter if these conditions occur.
- Wear light colored clothing when working outdoors in the sun and heat. Light colors reflect the sun's rays. Dark colors absorb sunlight, heating the body.



- If storms with lightning approach, **DO NOT** stand near a tree or tall object that can possibly attract lightning. **Seek shelter inside.** If you are working out in the open without shelter in the area, getting inside a hard topped automobile with the windows up is the next best option.

For additional information severe weather safety, the following resources may be helpful.

Other Resources:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

The Weather Channel
<http://www.weather.com>

Bureau of Labor Statistics
<http://stats.bls.gov>

		Relative Humidity (%)																	
		40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100					
Air Temperature	110	136																	<p>With Prolonged Exposure and/or Physical Activity</p> <p>Extreme Danger</p> <p>Heat stroke or sunstroke highly likely</p> <p>Danger</p> <p>Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion likely</p> <p>Extreme Caution</p> <p>Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion possible</p> <p>Caution</p> <p>Fatigue possible</p>
	108	130	137																
	106	124	130	137															
	104	119	124	131	137														
	102	114	119	124	130	137													
	100	109	114	118	124	129	136												
	98	105	109	113	117	123	128	134											
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	94	97	100	104	108	110	114	119	124	129	135								
	92	94	96	99	101	105	108	112	116	121	126	131							
	90	91	93	95	97	100	103	106	109	113	117	122	127	132					
	88	88	89	91	93	95	98	100	103	106	110	113	117	121					
	86	85	87	88	89	91	93	95	97	100	102	105	108	112					
	84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103					
	82	81	82	83	84	84	85	86	88	89	90	91	93	95					
	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	86	87					

Information abstracted in part from The Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and The Occupational Safety and Health Administration

CONNECTICUT ABLES PROGRAM

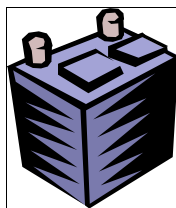
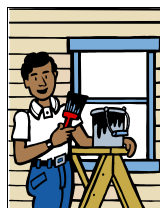
During the first quarter of 2005, the Connecticut Department of Public Health's (DPH) Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance (ABLES) Program received 122 reports of elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs) ≥ 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$, which is a 27% increase over the number of reports received during the comparable period from one year ago (96 reports). Of those, 36 reports were received regarding individuals with EBLLs ≥ 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$, which is a 56% increase over the number of reports received during the comparable period from one year ago (25 reports).

Individuals with EBLLs ≥ 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ receive a letter from DPH notifying them of their EBLL, accompanied by a Lead Fact Sheet and Take Home Lead Survey. Copies of the notification letters are also sent to the local health department where the individual resides to notify the Director of Health about the EBLL and keep them informed of our activities.

In addition, the ABLES program follows-up with companies having workers with EBLLs ≥ 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. For the first quarter of calendar year 2005, four workers were reported with EBLLs ≥ 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, which is a 50% increase over the number of reports received during the comparable period from one year ago (2 reports). Reports of these lead poisoned workers led to the following investigations by the Connecticut ABLES program:

The first investigation involved one individual that was identified in the previous two quarters with EBLLs of 93 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ and 46 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$, respectively. The EBLL received during this quarter was 57 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$, which is almost 25% higher than the previous quarter. This patient is working part-time as a self-employed scrap yard worker. The worker's EBLL was suspected to be caused by torching lead without using personal protective equipment. There are currently no other workers employed at this facility.

The second investigation involved one individual with an EBLL of 70 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. This patient is reported to be self-employed, however their occupation and source of exposure is unknown. The physician initially indicated that he thought their source of exposure was caused by lead-containing dust, but he could not be certain.



The third investigation involved an individual with reported EBLL's of 43 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ and 46 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ during this quarter. The worker also had an EBLL of 58 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ reported during the previous quarter. This worker is a self-employed handyman and their EBLL is suspected to be caused by scraping/sanding a door with lead-based paint. A physician questionnaire was completed and there were no other workers, children or spouse exposed.

The fourth investigation involved an individual with an EBLL of 41 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. The provider was contacted to identify the source of exposure, however we have been unable to obtain this information.

The Connecticut ABLES program is funded through a cooperative agreement with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). For more information about the Connecticut ABLES program, please contact Deborah Pease at (860) 509-7771.



SAFETY TIP

Avoid Roofing Injuries



Working high on roofs provides many opportunities for serious injuries. Falls from even eight-foot heights can lead to serious injury or death. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 76 fatalities in the United States during 2003 from roofing related causes. By following a few simple safety rules, you can help minimize the many hazards that you may encounter on the roofing job-site.

The following are some safety tips that can help you to avoid roofing injuries:



- Whenever you are working on a roof, regardless of the roof pitch, always use a safety device such as a safety harness. Make sure that harnesses and tie-offs are securely fastened and are appropriate for the size of the worker.
- **Drink plenty of fluids!** Asphalt roofs during the warmest months of the year can reach temperatures well over 100 degrees. Combine these high temperatures with the bright summer sun, and you run a high risk of dehydration and heat exhaustion.
- **Work on dry days!** Avoid working on roofs that are slippery from snow and ice, morning dew, or rain. The best idea is to wait for the roof to dry off before beginning any work for the day.
- Always use a ladder that is properly rated for the amount of weight that will be on the ladder. It is important to remember that if you do carry bundles of shingles or other equipment up the ladder with you, it could add significant additional weight.
- Whenever possible, use a lift to bring roofing shingles or other materials from the ground, to the roofer. Lifting heavy loads while on a ladder, can lead to serious strains, and increases your risk of a fall.
- Make sure you keep the work area on the roof clean and free of clutter, including nails, loose shingles, sawdust, and cords. Working off the ground is difficult enough, but working at heights with trip hazards in the area can be a deadly combination.



For additional information on safe roofing, the following resources may be helpful:

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/fallprotection/index.html>

Bureau of Labor Statistics
<http://stats.bls.gov>

Information abstracted in part from The Bureau of Labor Statistics, Work Safe, and The Occupational Safety and Health Administration.




YOUNG WORKER SAFETY AND HEALTH SAFE LIFEGUARDING



As summer approaches many teens will seek summer employment in a variety of occupational settings. Lifeguarding positions are only one of the many types of jobs teens will seek this summer. As with any full-time or part-time job, hazards may exist at the pool or beach that can pose a risk of illness or injury to lifeguards. Some of the hazards that can put lifeguards at risk include:



- Sun Exposure – Even short-term exposure on very sunny days can lead to sunburn. Studies have shown that individuals who experience several blistering sunburns when they are young have an increased risk of developing skin cancer later in life. Wearing sunblock with a high SPF, a hat, sunglasses, clothing that adequately covers exposed skin and using a beach umbrella or other cover can reduce your risk of suffering the harmful effects of the sun.
- Heat Stress/Stroke and Dehydration – Excessive exposure to hot weather can bring about a variety of heat-induced disorders. Some symptoms of heat exposure and dehydration include headaches, dizziness or lightheadedness, weakness, irritability, or confusion. Recognizing heat-related symptoms and acting quickly could mean the difference between life and death. Some simple steps that can be taken to avoid heat-related illness are consuming plenty of water and taking frequent breaks in cooler, shaded areas. A worker exposed to hot climates should drink 1 cup of water every 15 to 20 minutes to replenish necessary fluids. Workers should also avoid alcohol, coffee, tea and caffeine, which can also dehydrate the body.
- Infectious Diseases – Shower facilities, common areas, and pool water need to be disinfected regularly with appropriate sanitizing solutions in order to avoid common infectious conditions like athlete's foot, skin eczema, ringworm, swimmer's ear, and swimmer's itch (schistosomiasis). Wearing appropriate clothing and footwear, and changing damp clothes frequently will also help to prevent these problems. In addition, when treating individuals with open wounds, universal precautions should be used (surgical gloves, disinfecting solutions, etc.) to avoid coming into contact with bloodborne pathogens such as Hepatitis B & C viruses and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). 
- Chemical Exposures – Skin and respiratory irritations can occur when using chlorine and other pool disinfectants, chemical cleaning solutions and other toxic chemicals. Using these chemicals haphazardly or in a manner for which they were not intended can be extremely dangerous. Be sure to follow the recommended procedures and guidelines for personal protection in order to prevent harmful chemical exposures. Read labels carefully and remember to **NEVER MIX COMPOUNDS CONTAINING BLEACH WITH THOSE CONTAINING AMMONIA** because this mixture will release deadly chlorine gas.



- Rip Tide – It is important for lifeguards working at beaches to beware of ocean currents. A rip tide, or undertow, is a small but strong channel of water that moves out to sea. A lifeguard must be able to identify a rip tide's characteristic darker, deeper, and foamier water in order to spot them quickly in an emergency situation and avoid them.

- Workplace Violence – Physical assault, pushing, fist fights, threatening behavior (with or without weapons), unwanted touching or any offensive physical contact, and verbal abuse are situations that young workers may be confronted with while working as a lifeguard. When these situations occur, young workers should immediately get help from a supervisor or co-workers and the police or security personnel before attempting to intervene.

It is important for young workers to watch out for these and other types of hazards regardless of where they work. Identifying and understanding how to avoid hazards is critical to preventing workplace injuries. If you identify these or other potential hazards at your worksite, please talk to your supervisor and co-workers about how to eliminate them. If you have any questions or concerns about hazards at work or about your rights as a young worker, please contact Deborah Pease at the Connecticut Department of Public Health at (860) 509-7744.

CONNECTICUT OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

According to Connecticut State law, any physician that diagnoses a case of work-related illness is required to report that finding to the Connecticut Departments of Labor and Public Health within 48 hours, using the *Physician's Report of Occupational Disease* form. Since 1992, physician reports of occupational disease have been systematically compiled into the Connecticut Occupational Disease Surveillance System (ODSS). As of April 30, 2005, a total of 27,073 occupational disease cases have been reported to the ODSS.

During 2005 (January to April), the ODSS received a total of 697 occupational disease reports. This is a 98% increase over the number of reports received during the first quarter of 2004 (351 reports). Cumulative trauma disorders remained the most reported (255 cases, 36.6%) occupational disease during this period (January to April 2005) followed by burns (131 cases, 18.8%) and allergic/irritant dermatitis (124, 17.8%). During the same period, the industry most frequently reported with workers with occupational diseases was General Medical & Surgical Hospitals (11.6%) followed by Executive Offices (9.2%) and Skilled Nursing Care facilities (5.9%). For more information about the Connecticut Occupational Disease Surveillance System, please contact Ratan Singh at (860) 509-7744.

Physician Reports of Occupational Disease, January-April, by Year Connecticut Occupational Disease Surveillance System

