

# The California Merchant

*News for the California Merchant Safety Association*



## Help new employees feel at home

**W**orking safely is a team effort. You look out for other workers and they look out for you. Taking responsibility for others is especially important when it comes to new and young workers. They need you to keep an eye on them and remind them how to work safely.

Think about your workplace from the new worker's point of view for a moment. Remember your own first day on the job. You'll see a busy place full of strange equipment, unfamiliar chemicals and complicated tasks. Everyone else seems to know what they are doing. More than anything, you just want to fit in with the rest of the crew and look like you know what you are doing.

Help the new worker settle in safely by following these points:

- Show them where to obtain safety materials and instructions at your machine.
- Help the new worker get equipped, fitted and trained with the appropriate protective clothing and equipment for the task at hand.
- Show your new co-worker the labels for any chemicals you are dealing with. Help them understand how to read them and what PPE is necessary to work with them.
- Point out the location of fire extinguishers, alarm boxes and other emergency equipment.



- Make sure the new worker knows what to do in case of an emergency such as a fire. Does he or she know two exits from the workplace, and where to assemble outside
- Communicate the importance of leaving machine guards in place to prevent accidental contact with moving equipment and stock.
- If you see anyone wearing loose clothing which could become caught in machinery, speak up.
- Make sure the new employee knows who to talk to about any safety concerns or questions.
- If you see the new person or any worker doing something unsafe, speak up. It's not interfering; it's looking out for the other worker.  
Your advice to the new co-worker is not a replacement for proper safety orientation, training and supervision. However, you can help make sure he or she picks up the information necessary to work safely.

*March-April 2014*

*Vol. 26, No. 2*

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Prevent accidental  
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**... and more**

## Put a spring in your step with a clean office

Your house and yard get a sprucing in spring -- why not do the same for the place where you spend so many hours of your day? Busy workdays often mean office organization gets short shrift. Your cleaning staff may handle the day-to-day vacuuming and wipe-downs, but there are plenty of other areas to keep neat and tidy. Getting rid of clutter and streamlining your space will put a spring in your step.



1. Schedule a clean-up day for your whole office in advance. Make sure you have adequate waste receptacles and recycling bins for going through old files, magazines and desk junk. Order lunch in, and encourage everyone to work together to tidy their areas.

2. Cleaning will be much easier if you have everything you need. Make sure you have enough supplies for everyone: bags, cleaning cloths, glass sprays, wipes, and compressed air for keyboards and computers. Have

a shredder available for confidential documents -- make sure it's heavy-duty enough to be used all day.

3. Donate old (working) electronics and usable office supplies to a nonprofit organization. Schools and daycares often greatly appreciate paper, even if it has a logo or letterhead on it. Electronics that no longer work or are sadly outdated can be recycled through an e-waste program -- search online to find one in your neighborhood. And don't forget to recycle those old paper products!

4. Clean the electronics you're keeping. Wipe down your computer with a soft cloth, and use cotton swabs and compressed air to get crumbs, drips and fingerprints off your keyboard. Use compressed air to get the dust out of your connec-

tors and ports, and then clean and check the lengths of all cables and power cords for frays, nicks, hot spots and other areas that could be a danger.

5. After the cords, check other items that could be a safety issue. Test your office chairs and tables for wobbly legs, loose screws or nuts. Inspect ladders and step-stools. View your supply room and kitchen with a critical eye: Are there heavy things stored where they could pose a lifting or falling risk? How about slippery steps, loose floor tiles, ripped or frayed carpets that could pose a tripping hazard? Cords that aren't neatly tucked away?

Streamlining your office is a good way to improve efficiency -- and make your workplace safer in the process.

## Injury prevention: What surgeons want you to know

April is Injury Prevention Month. The members of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) have created a list of resolutions to keep your bones and joints healthy and avoid injury.

Orthopaedic surgeons understand bone and joint health problems are among the most prevalent and debilitating health challenges Americans face. This year, the AAOS would like to empower you to do your part to ensure a more healthy and active self: pledge to make the Ten Bone and Joint Health Resolutions part of your lifestyle.

#10: Always cut away from yourself in the kitchen

One slip of the knife can cause a terrible injury. When cutting fruits and vegetables (and especially avocados!), be sure to cut away from your body and keep your free hand away from the blade. Keep your knife handles dry, your cutting surface secure, and your cutting area well-lit.

#9: Warm up before sporting activities

A good warm up prepares your body for more intense activity by getting your blood flowing, raising muscle temperature, and increasing your breathing rate. Warming up gives your body time to adjust to the demands of exercise. This can improve your performance and help you get the results you want. How long

you warm up depends on your fitness level, but if you are new to exercise, your body will respond better with a longer warm up.

#8: Check your Vitamin D levels and start supplementation if warranted

Vitamin D is necessary for strong bones and muscles. Without Vitamin D, our bodies cannot effectively absorb calcium, which is essential to good bone health. Recent research supports that the body needs at least 1000 IU per day from diet and/or sunlight for good health. A simple blood test can reveal your Vitamin D level.

#7: Keep your bones strong with

Please see INJURY, page 6

# Drought 2014: Conservation at work

Office buildings use an average of 14,695 gallons per day of water. Your workplace may not be in a large building, or there may be other special circumstances, but these tips will help you evaluate where adjustments could be made.

Remember, water savings often bring energy savings, too. This simple checklist can get you on your way to reducing your water use and improving the efficiency of your facilities.

## Bathrooms & restrooms

- **Repair Leaks!** A leaking toilet can waste more than 50 gallons of water each day, and a dripping faucet or showerhead can waste up to 1,000 gallons per week!
  - Showerheads, faucets and toilets that must be replaced due to normal wear-and-tear should be replaced with low-volume models, which are widely available.
  - Low-volume showerheads use only 2 gallons of water each minute; older models may use as much as 3 gallons per minute.
  - Replace faucets that use as much as 2.5 gallons per minute with those which use only 1.5. In most cases, low-volume faucet aerators can be installed when the entire faucet does not need replacing.

Water use in toilets can be reduced by:

- Installing toilet tank water displacement devices, such as toilet dams, bags, or weighted bottles.
- Retrofitting flushometer (tankless) toilets with water-savings diaphragms, which save one gallon (20%) per flush.
- Replacing toilets with low-volume models. Toilets can use as much as 4.5 gallons per flush, while low-volume toilets use only 1.6 gallons per flush. An average savings of about 20% of the total water use in schools was possible through this one water conservation action.

Water use in urinals can be reduced



by:

- Setting urinals with programmable automatic flush valves to a water saving mode that flushes the urinal after more than one use.
- Replacing urinals with low-volume models. Urinals can use as much as 5 gallons per flush, while low-volume urinals use only 1 gallon per flush.

*These Water Conservation at Work suggestions are more than just a good idea. Low-volume water fixtures are also required by most local building codes.*

## Building maintenance

- Check the water supply system for leaks, and turn off unnecessary flows.
- Shut off the water supply to equipment and areas that are unused.
- Discontinue water circulation pumping in areas not in use.
- Read water meters monthly. Compare the results to the same month of the previous year. This will help to identify leaks as they occur, as well as monitor your conservation efforts.
- Check the pressure. Where system pressure is higher than 60 psi, install pressure-reducing valves.
- Consider using water-efficient ice machines.

## Heating/cooling

- **Reduce excessive blowdown!** Many cooling towers operate below the suggested levels of total dissolved solids (TDS) unnecessarily. Adjust boiler and cooling tower blowdown rate to maintain TDS at levels recommended by manufacturers' specifications.
- Consider using ozone as a cooling tower treatment to reduce water used for make-up.
- Shut off water-cooled air conditioning units when not needed, or replace water-cooled equipment with air-cooled systems.

## Cleaning

- Instruct cleaning crews to use water efficiently for mopping.
- Switch from "wet" carpet cleaning methods, such as steam, to "dry," powder methods.
- Change window cleaning schedule from "periodic" to "as required."

## Kitchen

- Turn off the continuous flow used to wash the drain trays of the coffee/milk/soda beverage island. Clean thoroughly as needed.
- Adjust ice machines to dispense less ice if ice is being wasted.
- Presoak utensils and dishes in basins of water, rather than in running water.
- Replace automatic shut-off spray nozzles, which can use as much as 4.5 gallons of water each minute, with low-volume nozzles using 2.0 gallons per minute.
- Turn off food preparation faucets that are not in use. Consider installing foot triggers.
- Do not allow water to flow unnecessarily. Consider using automatic shut-off faucets at bar sinks.

## Dishwasher hints

- Wash only full loads in the dishwashers.
- Replace the spray heads to

Please see CONSERVATION, page 4

## Why can't we be friends?

By Clarice Chu

It may seem like an old-fashioned, cliché notion that business and pleasure should be kept separate, but with the prevalence of social media, the difficulty in forming adult friendships and the many, many hours that people now spend at work, the idea of a person being friends with their boss isn't so strange. There are definitely some advantages to forming friendships with one's workplace superiors, but there are many potential drawbacks as well.

### Opposite Sex Friendships



### on the Job

One important element in the debate about workplace friendships is that it's probably much easier to form a friendly relationship with a superior if the two parties are of the same sex. No matter

how liberal and easy-going the human race becomes, there's just no avoiding the fact that there will generally be some office gossip about friendships between male and female coworkers. It never feels good to be the object of gossip, and there is

a good chance that any promotions or raises given to an employee who is friends with their boss of the opposite sex, no matter how well-deserved, will be talked about in an unfavorable light. For some people, the simple concept of decorum might be enough to deter them from relationships with their superiors.

### Social Media in the Workplace

Facebook, Twitter and Vine are fast becoming a standard method for commu-

Please see FRIENDS, page 5

## Conservation: Assign an employee to help

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reduce flow.

- Turn dishwashers off when dishes are not being processed.
- Reuse the rinse water from the dishwasher as flush water in garbage disposal units.

### Outdoor water use

- Apply water, fertilizer, or pesticides to your landscape only when needed. Look for signs of wilt before watering established plants.
- Water early in the morning or in the evening when wind and evaporation are lowest.
- Install an automatic rain shut-off device on sprinkler systems.
- Consider using low-volume irrigation, such as a drip system.
- Avoid runoff! Make sure sprinklers are directing water to landscape

areas, and not to parking lots, sidewalks, or other paved areas.

- Adjust the irrigation schedule for seasonal changes. Sprinklers generally do not have to be run as often in cooler weather, or during the rainy season.
- Use mulch around landscape plants to reduce evaporation and weed growth.
- Consider using drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plants.
- Be sure all hoses have shut-off nozzles.
- Use a broom, rather than a hose, to clear sidewalks, driveways, loading docks and parking lots.
- Wash vehicles only when needed.
- Investigate the availability of reclaimed water for irrigation and other approved uses.

### Make it a policy

- Educate employees about the importance and benefits of water conservation.
- Create water conservation suggestion boxes, and place them in prominent areas.
- Install signs in restrooms and cafeterias which encourage water conservation.
- Assign an employee to evaluate water conservation opportunities and effectiveness.

Any retrofitting and/or plumbing changes to facilities must be consistent with regulatory agencies. Check with the appropriate agencies before making changes.

For more than 200 tips on water conservation where you work, visit [wateruseitwisely.com/tips/category/office](http://wateruseitwisely.com/tips/category/office).

# Friends: At work, people make an extra effort

Continued from page 4

nicating and maintaining relationships, and it's almost a reflex to add new friends to all of one's social networking applications right off the bat. Someone who is becoming friends with their boss might give them access to view all of their shared pictures and status updates, but this can create some problems on the job.

Most people are not their natural selves when they are at work. In any workplace environment, employees must be a bit careful about the things they say and the ways that they act, and this is a good thing. At work, people make an extra effort not to make offensive statements and to be responsible and productive, but they may act very differently outside of the office. Before a person grants their boss access to their social media networks, it's impor-

tant to consider whether he or she really wants their personal life and true personality completely exposed in this way. Anyone who feels nervous about sharing their lives on social media with a superior should probably reconsider the friendship.

## Criticism and Feedback

One of the duties of company managers and supervisors is to provide feedback to employees regarding job skills and performance, and this feedback may sometimes be negative. In ordinary friendships, there isn't much need for critique or evaluation, but these things are inevitable in the workplace. Hearing potentially negative things about job performance from a superior that one also considers a good friend could be hurtful, and it might bring up emotions that have no place on

the job. By that same token, a boss who is friends with a subordinate may actually feel as though they can't be completely honest in their negative feedback if they are worried that it might cause a conflict in the friendship, and this is completely counterproductive.

Although every situation is different, it may be best to keep workplace friendships between employees who are equals. There are too many pitfalls to befriending a superior, and it isn't worth the potential of an awkward work environment or even the loss of employment.

*Clarice Chu discusses issues in the workplace and writes on behalf of a leading office solutions provider. To know more, please visit [www.servcorp.com.my](http://www.servcorp.com.my).*

## 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEALTH CARE REFORM 2014

### Small Business

- Must notify all employees of Health Insurance Exchange within 14 days of hire.
- Small group insurance may be purchased within the exchange or outside the exchange.
- All employees can apply for individual coverage on the exchange and may be eligible for subsidy.

### Individuals

- March 15, 2014 is the deadline for Individual open enrollment.
- October 1st is the next Covered California Open Enrollment
- Guaranteed Issue Health Insurance.

For more information or quotes, call your Health Care Reform experts at I&C Benefits.

Phone: 888-321-0141 Email: [vgonzalez@icbenefits.com](mailto:vgonzalez@icbenefits.com)



We are here to help you navigate your way through the HHR Mandate! Call today to set up a meeting with your employees to inform them of their Health Insurance benefits and options.

# What do your customers want? Ask!

By Kate Marsden

Looking for a way to make some more profits from your business? You already have a huge advantage – your existing customers – to help you find out what people want.

Many businesses know what their customers think of their services (although many don't even get that bit right, but that's another story!), but very few actually ask them what other products or services they would like to see.

It's such a basic question, yet very few companies do it. If that's you, ask yourself why not:

• Worried that they won't give you an answer? That's fine, that's their decision – but actually many will give you some feedback, if nothing else at least they'll know you are interested in them and you will definitely get more information than if you don't even ask.

• Worried that they are not happy enough about your current products and services? Be honest with yourself. If that's really what's stopping you, you

need to sort things out and quickly. No one has an automatic right to someone's business and if you think what you are offering is not up to standard then change it. But actually maybe you should still ask these customers the question – you might be pleasantly surprised and if not you'll get some valuable feedback.

• Don't want to be too pushy? People are sold to all the time and yes they get fed up with it. But these are people who have already spent money with you and all you are asking is what other products and services they would like you to offer. Surely it is better to get some feedback from them and build your order list rather than going off on your own and then trying to sell to them?

• Think you might not be able to give them what they want? OK, you might get a list of great ideas that you have no



idea how to deliver. But you will also know what your customers are prepared to spend money on and that they think you could deliver. If the worst comes to the worst, go and find yourself a partner who can deliver so you can meet your customer needs.

Whatever is stopping you, a simple conversation can give you all sorts of useful insight into your customer preferences and what they might buy, and can save you a huge amount of time on the wrong things!

It doesn't have to be complicated – if you only have a small number of customers then just pick up the phone and ask. Failing that, there are lots of online tools that let you set up free questionnaires, such as Survey Monkey, Ask Database, Zoomerang. Make it simple – a few questions only will get you far more responses and more targeted feedback.

So, take action NOW – this week, send a survey to your customers asking what other products or services they want you to offer.

## Injury: Follow ladder safety guidelines

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weight-bearing activities

Everyone needs lifelong weight-bearing exercise to build and maintain healthy bones. Consider any of the following weight-bearing activities each day: brisk walking, jogging and hiking; yard work such as pushing a lawnmower and heavy gardening; team sports such as soccer, baseball and basketball; dancing, step aerobics and climbing; tennis and other racquet sports; skiing, skating, karate and bowling; weight training with free weights or machine.

#6: Stay off ladders

They are dangerous! If you must use one to reach something on the top shelf of the pantry, to wash windows or clean the gutters, follow AAOS ladder safety guidelines: inspect the ladder for any loose screws, hinges or rungs; never place a ladder on the ground or flooring that is uneven; make sure the soles of your shoes are clean so they don't slip off the ladder rung; never stand on the top rung of any ladder and always grip the rails of the ladder while climbing. Learn more about ladder safety.

#5: Be aware of the loads you carry and how you carry

them

If possible, lighten the load you carry each day, because the larger and heavier your backpack, luggage, purse, or diaper bag, the greater at risk you are for neck, back and shoulder injuries. When lifting a large item, stand alongside it and bend at the knees. Try and limit bending at the waist. Lift luggage with your leg muscles and don't twist when lifting or carrying. Point your toes in the direction you are headed and turn your entire body in that direction. If you are carrying a backpack, use both straps to help distribute the weight.

#4: Protect your joints and learn how they can last a lifetime

Thirty minutes of physical activity a day can help individuals feel good and prevent certain medical conditions, so Get Up! Get Out! and Get Moving! Exercise helps keep the joints flexible, the muscles around the joints strong, bone and cartilage tissues healthy and reduces pain and stiffness. If you do have joint pain or arthritis, find an orthopaedic surgeon in your area and discuss your options on how best to preserve your joint.

#3: Eliminate hazards in

See BONES, page 8

# SAFETY ... IT PAYS



## Poison prevention in the workplace

**H**omes are not the only place to watch for poisons. Common chemicals such as pesticides and disinfectants, used liberally in the workplace, account for more than 145,000 reports made each year to poison centers. And while children are by far more likely to fall ill or die from accidental poisoning, adults are also at risk. More than 22% of accidental poisonings in adults are due to ubiquitous substances like bleach, disinfectants, rat and mouse poison, paint, and insect spray.

Chemicals are a major part of our everyday life at home, work and play. Examples include toxics, corrosives, solvents and numerous other substances. As long as we take proper precautions, these substances can be handled safely.

Chemicals that you use at home include gasoline, paints, fertilizers, lawn chemicals, bug spray, paint strippers, kerosene, bleach and other household cleaners. However, chemicals you may use at work are facility-specific sol-

vents, laboratory chemicals, fuels, paint, office copier chemicals, correction fluid, lubricants and corrosives.

We are exposed to chemicals in these ways.

### Inhalation

Breathing in dusts, mists and vapors  
 Example: Working with bags of concrete without a respirator -  
 - something as simple as laying in a new fence post.

### Ingestion

Eating contaminated food  
 Example: Having lunch in the work area where there are airborne contaminants



### Absorption

Skin contact with a chemical  
 Example: Contact dermatitis or an eye irritation

### Injection

Forcing an agent into the body through a needle or a high-pressure device  
 Example: Needle stick or misuse of a high-pressure washer

You can protect yourself against chemical hazards by:

- Reading container labels, material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and safe-work instructions before you handle a chemical;

- Using specified personal protective equipment (PPE) that may include chemical-splash goggles, a respirator, safety gloves, apron, steel-toed shoes, safety glasses with side shields, etc. Ensure the PPE fits properly and you are trained in its use;

- Inspecting all PPE before you use them. Look for defects in the equipment such as cracks, missing parts, rips, etc. Ensure your respirator has the

Please see **POISON**, page 8

## OSHA CORNER

Please visit the following address on the web to download helpful safety posters, guides and pamphlets for a safer workplace.

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp>



# Poison: Poison Prevention Week, March 16-22

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proper chemical cartridge for the particular chemical hazard. Change cartridges when it is necessary;

- Knowing the location of safety showers and eyewash stations and how to use them;

- Washing your hands before eating, especially after handling chemicals;

- Leaving your contaminated clothing at work. If you wear the clothes home, you can expose your family to the hazards.

In the United States nearly 2.5 million people report an exposure to poisoning annually.

There is a rise in unintentional poisoning by adults older than 19 years of age. They comprise less than 30 per-

cent of the exposures but are almost 90 percent of the deaths.

Drugs and alcohol make up 60 to 70% of poisonings among teens and adults, with the other 30 to 40% comprised of household chemicals, poisonous plants and carbon monoxide exposure.

There are actions that employees can take to protect themselves and their families from poisonings:

**Proper use of a product or medication** – Products and medications can hurt you if they are used the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person.

**Proper storage** – Don't store food and cleansers together. Poisons should be kept up high, out of sight, and locked up.

**Recognize look-a-like products** – Household products and medications come in attractive and colorful containers and packaging. Visit [pillvscandy.com](http://pillvscandy.com) to take a quiz -- can you recognize the medication?

**Supervision** – When children are unsupervised, this increases the risk of child poisonings. Poisonings occur most frequently at meal times when parents/caregivers are busy preparing meals.

Poison Prevention Week is March 16-22. It's a great time to prep your employees on proper use of chemicals, both at home and at work. Visit [http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_home/Resources/PoisonPreventionKit/Pages/WorkplacePoisonPrevention101.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_home/Resources/PoisonPreventionKit/Pages/WorkplacePoisonPrevention101.aspx) for kits, information, and PowerPoint presentations.

# Bones: Take active part in your healthcare

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your home and the homes of your elderly relatives that might cause a fall.

Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries among elderly adults and in 2010, more than 2.3 million Americans were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries. Research shows that simple safety modifications at home, where most falls occur, can substantially cut the risk of falls and related injuries. Fall-proof your home by placing a slip-

resistant rug or rubber mat adjacent to the bathtub for safe entry and exit or installing handrails on both sides of the stairway.

#2: Decide to Drive: Keep your Eyes on the Road and Hands on the Wheel

Every day, orthopaedic surgeons see the horrible consequences of people who choose to drive while distracted. So, each time you get behind the wheel, make a conscious decision to 'Decide to Drive.' Prepare to drive before you start your car—adjust all controls, mir-

rors, maps, navigation systems, etc., while still in park. If a distraction comes up while driving, pull over and manage it. But most importantly, keep your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel every time you drive.

#1: Take an active part in your own healthcare and be an informed patient

Better healthcare happens when patients and physicians work together as a team. It's all about communicating. So remember to write down your questions before your appointment. And, insist on

fully understanding all treatment options discussed, so together you can make the best decisions. Don't ever hesitate to ask questions, voice concerns or speak up when you don't understand. Always be honest and answer questions completely; share your point of view and don't hold back information. Read more patient-physician communication tips here.

For other tips and information on bone and joint health, visit [OrthoInfo.org](http://OrthoInfo.org).

"The CALIFORNIA MERCHANT" is a published bi-monthly newsletter of The California Merchant Safety Association. Annual subscription is available with membership in the California Merchant Safety Association. For membership information, call (562) 446-0013.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to "California Merchant Safety Association" at 10701 Los Alamitos Bl. Suite 200, Los Alamitos, CA 90720.