

Editor's Note: Association Newsletter Article – May 2010

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Summer Weather Brings Workplace Hazards

The air is turning warm and the days are getting longer as another Colorado summer arrives. Along with the new season comes the return of summer workplace hazards. Many Colorado workers, especially those who work outside, are at risk this time of year for injuries ranging from severe sunburn to heat exhaustion. It is important for you and your employees to understand and protect yourselves from Colorado's summer hazards.

Sunscreen

All outdoor workers should wear sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 on all exposed body parts. The higher the SPF, the better the protection against a sunburn and potential skin cancer. Reapply sunscreen every two hours to maintain its effectiveness. Workers can also benefit from wearing a brimmed hat and sunglasses. Make sure these items also meet your worksite's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements.

Hydration

While spending the day in the hot sun, remind your workers to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of clear liquids, including water or something with electrolytes, such as sports drinks. Sodas can actually prevent hydration and may contribute to heat stroke. If you or your employees feel dizzy or nauseous, take a break. Find a cool, shady place and rest until you feel better. Heat stroke can impair a person's ability to make sound judgments and may cause accidents. It is better to rest and avoid injuries, then to continue working.

Weather

Colorado summers also bring the chance of severe weather. Thunderstorms can bring hail, wind, and lightning, all of which pose risks to workers. Remind your employees to take cover during thunderstorms, but not under trees, where lightening risk increases. Lightening kills more workers each year than tornadoes, so if you or your employees are working off the ground and see lightening, get down immediately. If it begins to hail, find a covered shelter such as your car. Hail in Colorado ranges from pea size to golf ball size, both of which can cause injuries.

To be safe this summer, use common sense. Pay attention to the weather and help avoid workplace injuries. Be prepared for anything with sunscreen, water, and a plan of action if severe weather strikes.

As a Pinnacol policyholder, you have access to a wide variety of free materials including our “Sun Safety” poster that is available in both English and Spanish. You can order these materials online through the resources section of our website at www.pinnacol.com.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Pinnacol marketing manager.

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