



December 2010 Newsletter

Use This Safety Checklist - On Yourself!



We should all conduct a routine safety checklist on ourselves to make sure we're in "safe running order." See how you fare:

- I ask questions when I'm unsure about any aspect of my safety training.
- I avoid the hazards of electricity by understanding its dangers and by treating it with respect.
- I know more than one way to escape from my work area in case of fire, and could find these exits right now if necessary in the dark, or in smoke.
- I know how to report a fire in my work area.
- I practice good housekeeping by keeping my work area clean and orderly, free of scrap, spills and other hazards. I put my tools away after using them.
- I understand the lockout and tagout procedures for equipment in my work area.
- I know which hazardous chemicals and gases I work with or may encounter at work. I know how to protect myself against them and where to find more information about them.
- I understand the dangers of entering a confined space.
- I know how to avoid repetitive stress injuries.
- I know how to lift safely and how to protect my back in my job.
- I avoid slips and falls by eliminating hazards and wearing safe footwear.
- I understand the consequences of drug or alcohol use before or during work.

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

Tuesday December 14, 2010 - 12:00pm - Biltmore Hotel & Suites

Risk from Hand Held Laser

Presentation by Ken Barat, Laser Safety Officer for Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Just like with the hand held calculator the cost of hand held laser devices (generally refereed to as laser pointers) has gone down and the power has gone up to the point that obtaining Class3B and Class 4 lasers are within the reach of most consumers. Few consumers who purchase 30, 80, 200, 500 milliWatt and higher "pointers" are aware of the risk they present to themselves and others. The presentation will review the available ability of such "pointers", hazard, legal liability and incidents involving them. As well as some suggested resources and actions.

Presenter: Ken Barat Ken is the Laser Safety Officer for Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, former LSO for the National Ignition Facility Directorate at LLNL. He is the author of two textbooks on laser safety as well as many articles; IEEE Senior Member, Fellow of Laser Institute of America, and Rockwell Award winner for Laser Safety. Ken is Recognized as an expert on laser safety.

The ASSE San Jose Chapter is proud to receive the 2009-2010 Chapter Star award for dedication to Professional Development, Chapter Communication, and Superior Service.



ASSE Chapter Recognition
2009-2010



Deck the Workplace with Safe Decorations

Friday, December 12, 2008 7:00 AM

by Chris Kilbourne

Ho, Ho, Ho! Attention all elves! Right about now Santa's probably announcing the holiday decoration rules for the workshop to all his elves. You should be doing the same thing. If you haven't already, this week circulate a clear, written policy statement to all workers stating your organization's do's and don'ts for decking the halls and walls for the holiday season. Why? Because decorations can be a safety hazard—mostly a fire hazard, but poorly placed electrical cords for holiday lights can also cause trips and falls. Nobody wants to be a Grinch, but nobody wants a fire or other accident caused by holiday decorations, either.

Here's what you can safely allow. The best places for holiday decorations are in lobbies, reception areas, and break rooms. But you may decide to let employees decorate their workspaces and cubicles as long as they follow the rules. In your policy statement you might want to specify the kinds of decorations that are allowed. For example:

- Artificial trees and other greenery made of noncombustible or fire-retardant materials or treated with flame retardant
- No breakable decorations (glass balls can fall and break and become a cutting hazard)
- Flame-retardant paper or cloth decorations (Check the label.)
- UL-approved holiday lights and extension cords only (Although you should discourage the use of extension cords as much as possible, since they're a tripping hazard.)

You may choose to allow a real tree in your lobby or reception area. But if you do, make sure it's been properly treated with flame retardant, and make sure it gets watered regularly by a responsible designated employee. Living, potted trees with the roots still attached are nice and may also be safely used for decoration—but again, only in the lobby or reception area. They, too, need to be watered regularly to keep them fresh.

This is what you *don't* want. Be clear and be firm about these decoration no-no's:

- No decorations made of flammable or combustible materials
- No electric lights on metallic trees
- No decorations blocking exit signs, fire alarms, fire extinguishers, fire sprinklers, or emergency exits
- No decorations in stairwells or fire exit corridors
- No lighted candles (even in glass containers)
- No stapling of light cords to the wall (it could damage the cord's insulation and cause a fire)
- No cords in aisles, dangling over partitions or from desks, or anywhere else where they could be pulled or tripped over
- No holiday lights left on overnight or weekends (Someone has to be designated to turn off lights before he or she leaves for the day.)

Why It Matters ...

- On an average day, there are more than 200 workplace fires in America.
- An office fire could kill or injure workers, destroy the workplace, and end up costing a fortune.
- Holiday decorations may be festive, but they can also be dangerous.
- With a simple, clearly communicated policy and a little checking up, you can effectively control the safety risks and still let employees enjoy their decorations.



American Society of Safety Engineers
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Greater San Jose Chapter

<http://www.assesj.org> [email:gsjc@assesj.org](mailto:gsjc@assesj.org)



Space Heaters - Should You Allow Them?

As winter approaches and temperatures drop, you may be faced with the question of whether to allow the use of portable space heaters in the colder areas of your workplace. So, should you?

There are no federal workplace safety rules that prohibit portable electric space heaters in the workplace. OSHA rules do require that electrical equipment must be used according to manufacturer specifications on the unit's label and in the user manual. And extension cords, if used, must be rated to handle the electrical load (Many employers prohibit their use with space heaters.).

There's no question that space heaters can pose a major workplace fire safety hazard. Fires can be caused by space heaters without adequate safety features, space heaters placed near combustibles, or space heaters that are improperly plugged in. Statistics about damage caused by space heaters in the workplace are not readily available, according to the federal Office of Compliance. But public information is available on the effects of poorly utilized space heaters in the home. In 2002 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), space heaters in homes caused 2,800 structure fires and hundreds of deaths and injuries. Just Say No? It would be easy to "just say no," and many employers discourage the use of space heaters or ban them outright, sometimes citing edicts from their insurance companies. But the reality remains that no matter how much you tweak the HVAC system, no matter how much weather stripping you add, some areas of the workplace can be just plain COLD. On top of that, some workers may have medical conditions that require extra warmth even in "normal" (68-76 degrees F) work temperatures. And space heaters can be used safely in the workplace if proper precautions are taken.

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Consider these guidelines from Stanford University's SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory: The compliant use of electric space heaters is permitted, as a temporary measure, if the following requirements are met:

1. The building manager has checked that use of the space heater will not cause problems and that the need can't be met by adjusting the building HVAC system.
2. The space heater is kept away from any combustible material. (Refer to the manufacturer's instructions.)
3. The space heater is always turned off when the area being heated is not occupied.
4. Nothing is ever placed on top of or touching the space heater.
5. The space heater is plugged directly into a wall outlet. Do not use extension cords or power strips because of the risk of overheating and possibly catching fire.
6. The space heater is in plain sight.