

GENERAL SAFE WORK PRACTICES

This section contains general safe work practices, which are applicable to all departments and all employees. Each employee is responsible for performing their work in compliance with these practices.

Hazard Control: Correct any unsafe condition in your work area. Notify your supervisor promptly if you are unable to correct the hazard. Report any unsafe working habits on the part of others to your supervisor. You need not mention names but indicate the nature of the unsafe practice.

Safety Devices: Safeguards, safety devices or safety appliances must not be removed or made ineffective, except for the purpose of making repairs or adjustments.

Job Planning: Plan your job ahead of time. Acquire all of the correct tools for the job, including personal protective equipment. Work at a steady pace. Keep your work area orderly. Consult with your supervisor whenever undertaking a new assignment if you are unsure of the hazards or safety practices. Avoid using any equipment or tool you have not been properly trained to operate.

Safe Work Procedures: Always follow all work procedures developed by your department or supervisor. If you are unsure of any work procedure, consult your supervisor. Use reasonable care when performing your work to ensure maximum safety for yourself, other employees and the public. Do not engage in any distracting activity, which may result in injury to you or others.

Housekeeping: You are responsible for keeping your workspace orderly and free of hazards which may injure you or others.

- Store tools, equipment and materials in appropriate places when not in use.
- Keep doors and drawers on cabinets, desks and files closed when not in immediate use.
- Keep aisles and passageways clear of all obstructions.
- Dispose of waste and debris on a continual basis.
- Immediately clean up any spills you discover, even if you didn't cause the spill.
- Immediately report all building maintenance problems to your supervisor, such as torn carpeting, loose tiles, lighting failures, frayed electrical cords, etc.
- Inspect your work areas on a daily basis to identify and correct hazards.

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- Use only appropriate step stools or ladders when access to overhead areas is required. Never use a chair or any other piece of furniture as a ladder.

General Fire Safety: The best way to prevent fires is to identify possible fire hazards and to eliminate them before they start a fire. Know the location and type of fire extinguishers in your building. Fires are identified by different classes. The most common is Class A, B and C fires. Class A fires involve combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth, trash and other ordinary materials. Class B fires involves flammables such as gasoline, grease, oil, paint and other flammable liquids. Class C fires involve live electrical equipment. Fire extinguishers indicate which Class of fire they are intended for on the container. It is likely that your building will have multipurpose dry chemical (A,B,C) or (B,C) fire extinguishers. Never use a Class A Only fire extinguisher on a Class B or C fire.

When working with flammables, explosives and combustibles, the following safety procedures apply:

- Keep flammables, explosives and combustibles away from open flames or devices that create a spark.
- Obey all "NO SMOKING" areas.
- Do not refuel an engine while it is operating.
- Clean up flammable spills immediately. Put contaminated rags in a tightly covered metal container.
- Store flammables only in clearly marked containers. Store in well ventilated areas, away from heat and sparks.
- When transferring flammable liquids, bond the containers to each other and ground the one being dispensed from.

The following fire prevention safety procedures must be followed:

- Obey all "NO SMOKING" signs; smoking only in designated areas and dispose of smoking materials in appropriate ash trays.
- Never leave smoking materials burning unattended.
- Never place smoking materials in or on anything except an ash tray.
- Place rags soaked in oil, grease or flammables in a tightly covered metal container.
- Dispose of empty boxes and other waste combustibles on a daily basis to prevent accumulation.
- Keep fire doors, stairways, aisles and exits clear.
- Never use flammable liquids as a cleaning agent.
- Report fire extinguishers that have been discharged or require servicing to your supervisor.

General Electrical Safety: The most common cause of electrical accidents is ignoring standard maintenance, safe practices, and common sense. To prevent electrical accidents, the following safety procedures must be followed:

- Do not overload circuits, motors or other electrical equipment and machinery.
- Ground all electrical equipment and machinery properly.
- Be sure all circuits are dead before attempting to work on them. Follow all applicable Lock Out/Tag Out Program procedures.
- Keep all electrical wiring, cords, cables, and conduits secured and away from general traffic areas and anywhere people could trip over them, brush against them or otherwise inadvertently be exposed to them.
- Inspect all electrical cords for frays or broken wires before using equipment. Don't use if the cords are defective.
- Report all electrical maintenance defects, such as exposed wires, overheating motors, lamps or heating elements.
- Never use electrical equipment when working in a wet area or when clothing or shoes are wet.
- Motorized and other electrical equipment must be lubricated and maintained regularly to prevent electrical fires caused by overheating and misalignment.

General Vehicular Safety: The most common cause of vehicular accidents is driving too fast for the existing conditions. When driving on County business, you must always operate your vehicle within the posted speed limit. A slower speed than the posted limit is warranted when the road is slippery due to rain or snow, when the road has a lot of curves in it, and when vision is obstructed due to darkness, fog or physical obstructions. Even though a road is posted at a given speed limit, you must decide what the safe speed is for that road and then operate your vehicle accordingly. Don't let other drivers push you into higher speeds -- pull over and let them go around. If you are going to be late, call and let someone know, but don't rush and put yourself in a situation where you have to drive unsafely.

In addition to driving at a safe speed, follow these other safe driving procedures at all times:

- Always fasten your seatbelt before you put the vehicle in motion. Make sure any passengers are buckled as well.
- Check the vehicle for safety before operating it. Walk around the vehicle and check the tires, lights and reflectors. Check tools and equipment in side boxes to ensure they are secured and box doors closed and locked. Check anything in the truck bed to be sure it is neatly stacked and secured. Work the windshield wipers, headlights, flashers, turn signals, brake and tail lights and back-up lights/alarm. If any of these are not working, make immediate repairs or use another vehicle. Make sure all top rack loads are secured and, if you are carrying materials inside the passenger compartment, make sure they are secured and don't block your vision to the rear or sides.

- Practice defensive driving. “Look - ahead.” Eye the center of the lane. Always try to look at least one block ahead in city driving and 800 yards ahead on the highway. “Take it all in.” Instead of staring straight ahead all the time, take in the whole road and immediate vicinity in front, behind and to the sides. Look for pedestrians, children behind parked cars, vehicles entering traffic, animals, and signals. “Leave yourself an out.” Leave yourself plenty of room to escape a tight situation. Never drive too fast or too close. “Communicate.” Use the signals and the horn. Let others know when and where you are going.
- Practice courteous driving. The public expects more of you in a County vehicle. Always yield to pedestrians, bicyclists and joggers. Be alert at crossings and intersections. If you and other vehicles reached the intersection at the same time, yield the right of way to the other drivers.

Hazardous Materials Safety: Your department will have identified the hazardous materials present in your workplace. In addition to those materials, there may be other, everyday products in the workplace, which could cause you injury if used improperly. When handling any materials, follow the following safety precautions:

- Pay attention to all warning signs, read the label on every container you handle and use the material in accordance with the label directions. Check with your supervisor if you have any questions.
- Review the Material Safety Data sheet for each hazardous substance and take the precautions recommended, including use of personal protective equipment. A MSDS should be available on every hazardous material but not on common consumer materials. Follow label instructions on consumer materials.
- Follow established work procedures to the letter when handling and using hazardous materials.
- Never place hazardous materials in an unlabeled container unless you are the only one who will be handling the container. You must label the container with all applicable warnings and handling instructions if others will be handling the container.
- Clean up all spills immediately.
- Keep containers closed when not in use.
- Make sure all lids or caps are tightly closed before storing. Store all materials in appropriate locations with labels showing. Do not store flammable and combustible materials near a heat source.
- Dispose of all hazardous materials according to label instructions.
- Remove contaminated work clothing and do not wear it again until it has been cleaned.
- Wash carefully after handling chemical containers, before eating, or when leaving your work area.

Personal Protective Equipment: Personal protective equipment acts as a barrier between a hazard, which can not be guarded, and you. You must always use the protective equipment provided whenever your job exposes you to an unguarded hazard. The following are general guidelines for the use of protective equipment:

- **Eye Protection:** Safety glasses must be worn whenever working with tools that generate flying particles such as grinders, saws and weed cutters; whenever working with chemical materials that could splash in the eyes; whenever working with equipment that kicks up ground materials of dust or rocks, such as mowers.
- **Face Shields or Hoods:** Face shields or hoods must be worn when injuries are likely to occur to any part of the eye, face or respiratory system as a result of flying wood or metal chips, toxic or irritating chemical fumes, excessive heat rays, or hazardous light.
- **Hard Hats:** Hard hats must be worn when working in a trench or other excavations or in any environment where head injury may occur as a result of falling objects or overhead protrusions.
- **Ear Protection:** Ear plugs or muffs must be worn in any work environment where noise levels are constantly high or when working with equipment which generates a high noise level while in operation.
- **Hand Protection:** Appropriate gloves or other hand protection must be worn whenever there is an exposure to cuts, puncture wounds, abrasions, friction burns, heat or chemical irritants, and blood or other body fluids.
- **Trunk Protection:** Aprons or other suitable materials must be worn in situations where there is an exposure to the body from sharp objects, chaffing, heat, liquid, and chemicals.
- **Safety Vests:** Orange or strong yellow-green warning garments must be worn whenever working on foot in an area where you are exposed to vehicular traffic.
- **Respiratory Protection:** Appropriate respirators must be worn whenever there is an exposure to harmful dusts, mists, chemical fumes or lack of oxygen.
- **Foot and Toe Protection:** Safety shoes, boots, or shield must be worn whenever there is a routine exposure to foot or toe injury from the use of equipment or the handling of materials.
- **Leg Protection:** Chaps or other appropriate leg protection must be worn whenever there is an exposure to leg injury from handling materials or from abrasions or lacerations as a result of using equipment or tools.
- **Safety Belts:** Life lines must be worn whenever working at heights and there is the possibility of falling or whenever working in an enclosed space where the worker's position is obscured or where air supply may become inadequate, with an attendant worker stationed outside tending the life line. (If in a qualified Confined Space, Confined Space requirements shall be followed).
- **Safety Seat Belts:** Seatbelts must be fastened on all passengers and the driver before placing any vehicle in motion.

Equipment and Machinery: Improper use of equipment, machinery or improper maintenance and condition of the equipment/machinery can result in serious, even fatal, injury. When using the equipment/machinery in your job, follow these basic safety guidelines:

- Never remove any safety guard, device, sign, or appliance from any piece of equipment/machinery.
- Frequently inspect the machinery/equipment to ensure that it is in safe operating condition.
- Operate only equipment that your supervisor has authorized you to use and only in areas in which you have been directed to work.
- Keep your hands and body clear of all moving parts of equipment/machinery. Report any unguarded equipment to your supervisor.
- Never have stationary equipment, which is in operation, unattended.
- When getting out of mobile equipment, either shut it down or make sure that it will not move by setting the emergency brake and placing it in the proper gear.
- When operating mobile equipment, check clearances forward, back and sides before placing the equipment in motion. Never operate mobile equipment where it may come into contact with electrical lines.
- When servicing equipment/machinery, make sure the power is off and the main switch or starter locked out and tagged.
- Don't wear loose clothing, long hair, or jewelry around machinery with moving parts.
- Always pay close attention to what you are doing when working on or around equipment/machinery.

Tools: Tools are intended to make your job easier and safer. Yet many injuries are caused because employees use tools which are in disrepair, improper for the job, or in which the employee is not properly trained. The following safety procedures apply to the use of tools:

- Frequently inspect tools and electrical cords to make sure they are in good condition and repair.
- Repair or replace tools which are defective, including worn saw blades, rounded hammer heads, tools with cracked or splintered handles, wedges and chisels with mushroomed heads, wrenches that are worn and allow slippage, and electric power tools with worn, deteriorated or inadequate insulation.
- Use the proper tool for the job.
- Do not remove any guard from a power tool. Report any defects or guards that have been removed to your supervisor.
- Do not operate electrical tools in an area where they may come into contact with water

or other liquids. Make sure that electric power tools are double insulated or properly grounded.

- Never use a power cable to suspend an electric tool in either handling or storage.
- Return all tools to proper storage when not in use.

Falls, Trips, and Slips: Along with back injuries, falls, trips and slips are the most common accidents occurring to County employees. To prevent these types of accidents, follow these safety procedures:

- Keep aisles, walkways, and stairways clear of all obstacles.
- Never carry so much material that you are unable to see what is on the ground in front of you.
- Keep floors free of grease, oil, and water or any material that may cause someone to slip and fall.
- Report loose carpeting, tiles, stair boards, and protruding nails to your supervisor.
- Wear appropriate footwear for the job you are doing and the building in which you work. Select shoes with low heels and closed toes to give more surface area on which to support your body weight evenly.
- Never lean back in a chair so far that the legs of the chair come up off the ground.
- Before sitting down, make sure that your chair is in the proper position.
- Never run in passageways or on stairs. Take one step at a time on stairs and use the handrail.
- When using a ladder, make sure the footing of the ladder is secure on even ground and that the ladder steps are in good repair. Never use the top step of a ladder to stand on.
- Proceed slowly when climbing onto or off equipment, especially if the equipment or your shoes are wet. Use the handholds and never jump off the equipment.
- Proceed slowly when walking on uneven terrain. A support rope is recommended when climbing down a steep slope. When working outside, select shoes that are made of a strong and sturdy material, with good soles and heels, preferably a nonskid, grooved heel and sole.

Back Injuries: Back injuries are too frequent among County employees. Back injuries come from several sources, including poor posture and improper lifting, carrying and twisting.

Poor posture misaligns your bones and places strain on muscles, bones, ligaments and other soft tissue such as tendons. The result of over stressing the body is pain and fatigue. Whether the problem is chronic back pain or leg pains, poor posture is often the cause. The following methods will reduce the strain of sitting and standing:

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- Chair height: The height of the seat should let both of your feet touch the floor with the knees a bit higher than the hips. Use a box or footrest if the chair is not adjustable.
- Chair position: Keep it close to the desk or table so you're not forced to lean forward to reach anything or to write.
- Desk/table position: Make it low enough so that computer keyboards, typewriters, and other equipment are easy to reach.
- Seated posture: Sit with your back against the back of the chair. If you feel yourself bending forwards, cross your legs and sit up straight. Don't slouch forward and keep your elbows off the desk or table. Make sure your spine and head are erect.
- Standing posture: Your head and shoulders should be slightly pulled back and your lower back arched. A line dropped from your ear should go through the top of your shoulder, middle of the hip, back of kneecap and front of anklebone. If you stand in one location for any length of time, put one foot up on a stool. Keep your knees bent and your stomach tight.

When lifting materials, follow these safety procedures:

- Always use a hand truck or forklift for heavy and cumbersome loads.
- Check the weight of an object before attempting to lift it by pushing against it. If the object is too heavy for you to lift by yourself, get help or use a lifting device.
- Set feet solidly and far enough apart for good balance and stability. Get as close to the load as possible. Bend your knees to a squatting position while keeping your back straight. Get a firm grip on the object and straighten up by using your legs, not your back, until you are standing.
- When carrying an object, hold it close to your center of gravity (1 1/2 inches below your navel). Never twist your upper body when carrying an object. To change directions, turn your entire body by changing or shifting your feet to the desired direction. To put the object down, bend to the squatting position, keeping the load close to your body and your back straight.
- No matter how light an object may be, never bend from the waist to pick it up. Always bend at the knees and keep the back straight.
- When pushing or pulling an object, keep your knees bent and your feet apart to provide a wide base of support. Keep your back straight and your stomach tight. Keep the object close to your center of gravity (1 1/2 inches below the navel).
- When moving an elevated object, first check the weight of the object by pushing up on the object. If the object is heavy, get a ladder or step stool so that you can bring the object in close to your body. Once you have a good grip on the object, carefully step down from the ladder or stool. To place a heavy object to an elevated position, use a ladder or step stool so you're even with the elevated position. Never try to "press" a heavy object above your head.

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- When carrying a heavy or cumbersome object with another person, always communicate any movement you are going to make to the other person so they are not surprised by a sudden shift in the weight.
- Never carry so much material that you are unable to see what is on the ground in front of you. Make more than one trip if necessary.