

Safety

SOLUTIONS



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Do Your Hispanic Workers Understand You?

The increasing number of Hispanic workers in our industry makes it critical that safety messages are understood. Yet across the country, in all industries, Hispanic workers continue to get seriously injured and killed in *preventable* accidents.

“The number of Hispanic workers dying in the workplace is unforgivable,” says Hank Cierpich, a safety engineer and investigator with the California Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program.

Cierpich, who has investigated numerous deaths of Hispanic workers in our industry and others, told attendees at the 12th Annual AgSafe Conference in Seaside, California, that employers of these workers often missed the following important points:

- Focusing safety training on the target audience and ensuring that all safety training materials and other safety information are available in both Spanish and English
- Orienting safety training to the workers’ educational and literacy levels
- Involving employees in hands-on training, particularly on potentially hazardous equipment
- Following up with hands-on testing to ensure understanding
- Strictly enforcing safety rules, versus just being satisfied if the work is getting done
- Not assigning dangerous tasks to inexperienced employees
- Understanding how such issues as pride and a fear of failure may result in Hispanic workers believing that they must get the job done at all costs

For access to FACE reports from across the country, visit: www.cdc.gov/niosh/face.

The California FACE program also has excellent one-page “FACE FACTS” sheets available at www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb/ohsep/face

Daily Excavation Checklist

Editor's note: Landscape construction crews involved in excavation work must constantly think about such safety issues as the location of utilities and cave-in protection. This checklist, which can be modified to meet your specific needs, was provided by 4-Safety in Marquette, Michigan, Web site: www.4-Safety.com

Client _____ Project Name _____ Date _____

Location _____ Job No. _____ Excavation Depth and Width _____

Approx. Temperature ____ Approx. Wind Direction ____ Safety Rep. _____

Soil Classification _____ Protective System Used _____

Activities in Excavation _____ Competent Person _____

Excavation > four feet deep? _____ Yes _____ No (Note: Trenches over five feet in depth are considered excavations. Any items NOT checked off on this form MUST be remediated prior to any employees entering the excavation.)

GENERAL:

- Employees protected from cave-ins and loose rock/soil that could roll into the excavation
- Spoils, materials, and equipment set back at least two feet from the edge of excavation
- Engineering designs for sheeting and/or manufacturer data on trench box capabilities on site
- Adequate signs posted and barricades provided
- Training (toolbox meeting) conducted with employees prior to entering excavation

UTILITIES:

- Utility company contacted/given 72 hours notice, and/or utilities already located and marked
- Overhead lines located, noted, and reviewed with the operator
- Utility locations reviewed with operator; precautions taken to ensure contact does not occur
- Utilities crossing the excavation supported, and protected from falling materials
- Underground installations protected, supported, or removed when excavation is open

WET CONDITIONS:

- Precautions taken to protect employees from water accumulation (continuous dewatering)
- Surface water or runoff diverted/controlled to prevent accumulation in the excavation
- Inspection made after every rainstorm or other hazard-increasing occurrence

HAZARDOUS ATMOSPHERES:

- Air in excavation tested for oxygen deficiency, combustibles, other contaminants
- Ventilation used in atmospheres that are oxygen rich/deficient and/or contain hazardous substances
- Ventilation provided to keep LEL (lower explosive limit) below 10 percent
- Emergency equipment available where hazardous atmospheres could or do exist
- Safety harness and lifeline used
- Supplied air necessary (if yes, contact company safety representative)

ENTRY AND EXIT:

- Exit (i.e., ladder, sloped wall) no further than 25 feet from ANY employee
- Ladders secured, and extend three feet above the edge of the trench
- Wood ramps constructed of uniform material thickness, cleated together at bottom
- Employees protected from cave-ins when entering or exiting the excavation

Employee Injuries Can Lead to Costly Claims

Back injuries ... severe cuts and lacerations ... at-fault motor vehicle accidents... slips/trips ... falls. These are among the many types of injuries occurring in our industry that can result in costly workers' compensation claims. Depending on the type of work you do (residential, commercial, installation, tree care, etc.), certain injuries may occur more frequently than others.

Gary Clevenger, CNA risk control specialist, offers tips on three types of injuries CNA often sees among the PLANET members it insures:

Injuries due to manual handling of materials. These include lifting or carrying materials long distances across uneven surfaces. Clevenger suggests:

- 1) Stage materials to limit carrying distances and control weights. In other words, it is preferable to have two people carrying materials a shorter distance than one person carrying a heavy object a longer distance.
- 2) Provide mechanical assistance, such as forklifts or skid steer loaders, when feasible.
- 3) Restage materials as work progresses to improve efficiency and reduce fatigue.

For English or Spanish training materials and additional tips, see the checklist for safe practices: *Tips to Help Prevent Lifting-Related Injuries* in the March 2005 issue of *Safety SOLUTIONS* and safety tips sheet no. 2: *Reducing the Risk of Lifting Injuries in the Landscape and Horticultural Industries* at www.landcarenetwork.org/cms/programs/safety.html.

Struck-by injuries. These range from being struck by a falling object like a tree limb to being hit by a moving vehicle or equipment.

Clevenger suggests: 1) Require high visibility vests in work zones. 2) Designate drop zones for tree trimming. 3) Require spotter assistance when backing vehicles and trailers.

Falls. It's important to require and strictly enforce appropriate fall protection when working from heights and wherever workers are exposed to fall hazards, Clevenger says. He adds: 1) Hold supervisors accountable for enforcing of your fall protection rules. 2) Know that falls account for about five deaths per workday in construction in the U.S. "If you're not serious about enforcing fall protection and holding supervisors accountable for its enforcement, you could become one of the statistics," Clevenger says.

For additional information from CNA on these and other safety topics, visit www.cna/riskcontrol.com.

NEW Bilingual Safety Training

PLANET announces the availability of a fourth PLANET-OSHA Alliance safety tips sheet (tailgate training) entitled *Reducing the Risk of an Amputation*. This new one-page training script, available to the entire industry in both English and Spanish, is aimed at preventing amputations from mower blades, wood chippers, chain saws, or other equipment.

To access all four bilingual safety tips sheets, click on: www.landcarenetwork.org/cms/programs/safety.html.

Mentoring: A Great Safety Idea

Dues Nursery & Landscaping, Ltd. in Celina, Ohio, has had excellent success teaching safety by assigning each new employee both to a manager and to a seasoned coworker. “By taking them to one seasoned employee, we know that they will be trained correctly and efficiently,” says Nursery Manager Tom Bruggeman. “Safety is taught from Day One.”

Dues employs about 15 workers during the peak summer months. Using seasoned employees as mentors saves the company money. “By training them right the first time, you’re not going to have a retraining. Also, this ensures consistency,” Bruggeman says.

New TCIA Safety Certification

The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) recently launched a new safety certification program, the Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP). The program’s goal is to train companies to establish safety cultures.

“The tree care industry has participated in standards development for years to identify hazards and improve safety,” TCIA President and CEO Cynthia Mills says.

“What we haven’t done is make a significant difference in the overall industry’s accident rates. They’re unacceptably high. This collective experience of the tree care industry reduces our credibility with the outside world and profoundly impacts insurance rates,” she adds.

For more information, visit www.tcia.org.

Jeff Graham, CLP, of LaPorte & Associates has partnered with the green industry since 1998, providing insurance products and safety-related services nationwide. Proven savings, averaging 22%, are the result of large volumes of green industry business and strong relationships with insurance company underwriters.

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