



TDCJ Risk Management's *Training Circular*

Volume 7 Issue 04

Risk Management Issues

April 2007

PREVENTING SPRING INJURIES



The temperature is rising and your winter clothes are slowly working their way closer to the back of your closet with each passing week. The flowerbeds in front of the Units are starting to show signs of color and the pollen count is off the charts! Cliché as it is, *Spring is in the air*.

This is also a time of year in which employee and offender injury numbers typically begin a slow climb that doesn't plateau until the end of Summer. There are almost as many theories as there are injuries for the cause of this phenomenon but this month we will look at some of the more common injuries and ways to prevent them.

Outdoor Injury Prevention

Risk Management statistics historically reflect across-the-board increases for occupational injuries from March through August. It's logical to

see an increase in the number of injuries occurring while performing work outdoors simply because staff is now able to recommence outdoor work activities. This is all the more reason to spend additional time on safety training for 'outdoor jobs.' Supervisors should review the training material for their workers to ensure that it is still applicable and encompasses all areas of their responsibility. If new equipment has been acquired, or if there have been changes in standard operating procedures, supervisors should modify their safety training to reflect the changes. Equipment used to accomplish 'outdoor work' such as lawnmowers, weed eaters and utility vehicles should be closely inspected. Special attention should be given to verify the safety devices on this equipment have not been compromised or removed. Ensure that all machine guarding is in place and

securely fastened. Any equipment found to be defective or not have all its safety devices in tact should be removed from service immediately until the condition can be corrected. If the unsafe condition cannot be corrected, the equipment should be permanently removed from service.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Most equipment operation requires some degree of PPE for the user. Outdoor equipment may present several hazards that warrants the operator wearing multiple types of PPE. The operator may need hand, foot, eye, hearing and limb protection depending on the present or anticipated hazards. In accordance with Agency policy, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that appropriate PPE is available, used and maintained in a sanitary and reliable condition (*Risk Man-*

agement Program Manual RM-23). PPE should be kept in good repair and replaced whenever its effectiveness is questionable. For instance, a pair of goggles or safety glasses that have severely scratched lenses may still provide adequate eye protection from flying objects but the scratched lenses impair the vision of the wearer. Because the wearer's vision is obstructed, the eyewear is defective and should be replaced.

Other Outdoor Concerns

People aren't the only living things that are becoming more active outdoors! Insect bites become more prevalent as the types of reported 'Spring' injuries. Bee stings are one of the most common reported injuries involving insects. According to the stats, staff and offenders working outdoors are the most likely of staff to receive bee stings. In the event you are stung, attempt to remove the stinger immediately. This won't make the pain go away, but it will limit the amount of venom entering your body. Reducing the amount of venom lessens the severity of the sting and the longevity of its symptoms.



It's a Jungle Out There!

Several Units and Facilities have mini green belts around them. These are the areas in which Unit crops are raised or other operations are performed. Resumed agricultural activity in these areas may force animals and insects, whom have called the green-belts home all winter long, to migrate from these areas to the Unit. The Unit's buildings and structures host numerous attractants for these animals and insects. Some of the attractants are inherent and cannot be eliminated such as food preparation

and storage areas. Offenders may also keep commissary items in their housing which also entices the insects. Most Units and Facilities have eradication programs in which exterminators routinely spray for insects. Insects, especially bees, are attracted to certain fragrances. Refraining from wearing strong colognes or perfumes will significantly reduce your chances of being mistaken as flora by a stray bee.

Spider bites also become quite common as the mercury rises. The majority of reported spider bites occur during activities that involve searches of some type. Staff need to be particularly aware this when

performing offender housing shakedowns or when working in or around low traffic areas such as pipe chases and crawl spaces. Spiders thrive in these spaces.

Indoor Injuries

Up to now, the focus has been on injury statistics relating to outdoor activities. Indoor injury trends also show increased activity during the spring and summer months. Slips, trips, and falls are always a concern but more so in the Spring. Some of these may be attributed to 'April showers' creating slip hazards. Another theory involves building characteristics. Some buildings sweat. Actually, it's condensation. Units with smooth concrete floors and ventilation systems that draw in humid ambient air are most susceptible to this condition. We'll forgo the full physics lesson, but here's

what basically happens. The concrete in the building cools in the evening and overnight periods. The

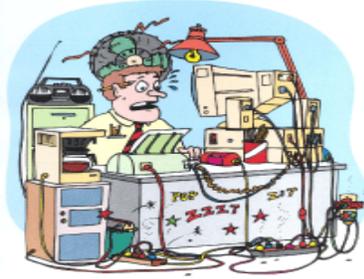
air inside of the buildings is saturated with humidity (*not so much if you're in far North or West Texas!*). As this air



cools, it condenses and the moisture within it coalesces. This forms water droplets that collect on the walls and floors. This is basically what causes a building to 'sweat.' If this moisture is allowed to collect on the floor, a slip hazard has been created. Wet floors should be mopped dry immediately. Appropriate signage should always be used to alert staff and offenders of potential slip hazards. Slips, trips and falls often occur in office environments. Contributing factors for these injuries range from faulty furniture to wet floors.

When you're 'Spring-cleaning' your offices, pay particular attention to where and how the telephone and communication cables are run. Route them in a manner they don't present a trip hazard.

Also check those surge protectors and power strips. No piggy-backing is allowed! That



is, do not plug one power strip into another in order to gain outlets. A multi-outlet strip does not provide more power to a location, just more accessibility. The more common power strips have 6 receptacles. This doesn't mean they can power any 6 devices of your choice. Check with your Maintenance department to ensure the power strips in your office are being safely utilized.

Finally, take some time this Spring to get outside and take in the scenery. Studies indicate that ultraviolet rays (UV), at moderate exposure levels, are good for you! UV rays cause the human body to produce vitamin D, which helps the body regulate calcium levels and strengthens the musculoskeletal system. *And you thought only milk did the body good!*

Training Circular
TDCJ Risk Management Department
Volume 07 Number 04
April 2007

Debbie Liles
Director, Administrative Review and Risk
Management

John Dunphy
Program Administrator
Risk Management

Doug Odom
Audit & Inspection Manager
Risk Management

David Scholwinski
Operations Manager
Risk Management

The *Training Circular*, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Design and layout of the *Training Circular* is performed by David Scholwinski, Operations Manager, Risk Management. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome. Send Suggestions to:

David Scholwinski
Risk Management Department
1060 hwy 190 east
Huntsville, Texas 77340
or,
david.scholwinski@tdcj.texas.gov

All items received become property of the Risk Management Department unless otherwise agreed and are subject to be rewritten for length and clarity. Permission is hereby granted to reprint articles, provided source is cited.