

Winter 1996

Health and Safety at DOL, Winter 1996

Maine Department of Labor Safety and Health Committee

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HEALTH and SAFETY at DOL

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Issue 3

Winter 1996

DOL Safety Policy is Adopted in Response to Employee Survey

A health and safety training survey of DOL employees was conducted during the months of September and October of 1995. Eighty-four of the surveys were returned, representing 14 percent of the total distributed.

The survey listed three types of training as possibilities: Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), First Aid, and Stop Smoking. There were 76 employees who requested CPR training, 66 who requested First Aid training, and 22 who asked for Stop Smoking training.

The survey also asked employees to request other kinds of safety and health training not listed specifically. Following are the types of training requested and the number of employees who asked for them:

- 1) Stress management techniques and exercises; benefits of exercise; exercise training, including space, equipment, and trainers (five requests);
- 2) Personal security awareness; self-defense (five);
- 3) Nutrition, health, eating right, weight loss (five);
- 4) Training for exiting the building in case of fire or bomb scare; building security (four);
- 5) Work environment; ergonomics

(three); 6) Defensive driving (two); 7) Household safety, electrical hazards, use of extension cords, handling and disposal of chemicals (two). There was one request each for HIV awareness training, alcohol and drug abuse prevention training, and Heimlich Maneuver training.

As a result of the information received in this survey, the Safety and Health Committee proposed to Commissioner Landry that DOL institute a training policy for health and safety issues. The training policy encourages employees to take health and safety courses including CPR, first aid, defensive driving, and smoking cessation.

In areas where 10 or more employees request training, the Office of Human Resources will arrange for a course to be offered.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The DOL Safety & Health Committee needs new members. Please contact Rona Backstrom (624-5120) or Jonathan Lepoff (624-6464)

In the case of subjects where there are fewer than 10 employees who want training, the Department will still reimburse employees who take safety and health-related courses.

Small groups or individual employees should apply for training programs in accordance with the existing Departmental Training Policy.

Chemical ID Plan and Pesticide Policy are in Place at DOL

In 1995, the DOL Health and Safety Committee worked on setting up policies for the identification of hazardous materials and chemicals and for the use of pesticides in the workplace.

Both of these issues are covered by laws at the federal or state level, and both of them have been the cause of concern on the part of DOL employees and workplace safety regulators in Maine. By reviewing the law and the Department's past experience, the Safety and Health Committee developed policies to prevent future hazards to DOL workers.

The hazardous material and chemical ID plan requires each DOL location to develop its own written hazard communication program by February 29, 1996. A model chemical ID program was provided to facility managers in a DOL Letter. Among the requirements are 1) a list of hazardous materials by Department area; 2) material

safety data sheets (MSDS), and descriptions of how they are prepared and made available to employees; 3) a description of how labels and other forms of warning are prepared and used; 4) a description of the training information procedures used for employees; and 5) exchange of information with contractors.

The Pesticide Policy was presented in a December 8 DOL letter to employees, and includes the following standards:

- 1) Employees will not apply pesticides;
- 2) Employees will be informed when pesticides are to be applied;
- 3) The least toxic product will be used;
- 4) Products will not be applied when employees are present;
- 5) Preference will be given to applying pesticides when buildings will not be occupied for one or more days following application; and
- 6) Copies of the MSDS for the product being applied will be made available to employees.

Safety & Health Videos are Available from Safety Division Library in Hallowell

The Bureau of Labor Standards' Safety Division has an extensive library of safety and health training videos available for borrowing at no cost. These videos are used by employers around the state, and contain a variety of information that would be useful to DOL employees.

Some of the kinds of information covered and specific titles available are:

Stress (*Danger Zone: Stress*); Air Quality (*Indoor Air Quality: A Public Perspective, Clean Air in Classrooms* (this video is also for general use), *Industrial Ventilation*); Ergonomics (*The ABC's of Ergonomics, Ergonomics: The Practical Approach, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome in Industry, Working With Display Screen Equipment*); Workplace Security (*Watch Out for Assault: Staying Safe and Secure, Violence in the Workplace, A Fighting Chance: Self-Defense Strategies for Women*).

There are also slide shows with audio tapes available for borrowing, such as *Principles of Ergonomics - Volumes 1 & 2*.

Up to two items may be borrowed at a time, for up to two weeks at a time. Borrowed items may be sent and returned by UPS, MDS, or certified mail. To borrow any item mentioned above, or to obtain a complete list of available material, please contact Kim Nixon at the Safety Division, tel. 624-6460.



Indoor Air Quality Primer Published by the Bureau of Labor Standards

In the January 1996 issue of the Bureau of Labor Standards' quarterly newsletter *Safety & Health Monitor*, Occupational Health Specialists Leslee Canty-Noyes and Catherine Corriveau published an article entitled "An Indoor Air Quality Primer" which provides useful information about the causes of various indoor air quality problems. Following are brief excerpts from the article:

"Common causes of indoor air quality problems are improper ventilation, contamination, and bioaerosols [such as mold, bacteria, or fungi]...

"Sources of [air] contamination can be located inside or outside a building. Interior sources can include: copy and print machines that are not vented properly; drain traps that have dried out which causes sewer gases to be released; contamination within the ventilation system (dirt, refrigerant leakage or microbiological growth); chemicals used for cleaning; tobacco smoke; volatile organic compounds from painting, solvents and adhesives; upholstered surfaces that produce or collect dust and dirt which are not cleaned routinely; chemicals released from building components or furnishings; inadequate housekeeping and maintenance...."