

OSHA Wants to Revise PPE Fit Requirements for Construction Workers



The failure of standard-sized personal protective equipment to fit smaller construction workers - especially women - has prompted OSHA to try to align the industry's PPE fit requirements with other industry standards.

According to the proposed rule; OSHA's construction standards, unlike it's general industry and maritime PPE standards, don't require PPE to fit the wearer. This as well as problems with access to properly fitting PPE, have long been safety and health concerns in the construction industry. The proposed rule clarifies the existing requirement and OSHA does not expect the change will increase employers' cost or compliance burdens.

PPE must fit properly to **(continued on page 2)**

It's Balloon Fiesta Time!



Any local will tell you October is the most beautiful time of year in New Mexico, made so in large part by the much anticipated sight of colorful balloons punctuating the skyline. During this season, the sky is bluer, the days are gentler, and the mornings crisper -- almost as though the landscape has taken a deep sigh -- and on the desert's warm breath sails the annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. For more than half a century, this age-old form of flight, which has captured the human imagination for hundreds of years, is celebrated in a 9-day event that draws the devout, the curious and the novice balloonists to the world-famous Balloon Fiesta Park

It's a sight to see - but not from your vehicles while driving down the road. Now is the time to remind you employees the hazards this event exposes our workers to:

1. Traffic is going to increase considerably.
2. Drivers on the road who are not familiar with our streets.
3. Driver distractions when the balloons are in the air.
4. Chase teams cutting through traffic trying to keep up with their balloon.
5. Traffic delays.
6. Road rage

Our drivers need to drive defensively:

- Be aware of what's going on around their vehicle at all times.
- Plan their trips so they can get to the job sites on time
- Be patient and control your temper. Drive carefully and keep safety first!

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provide adequate protection to employees. Improperly fitting PPE may fail to provide any protection to an employee, present additional hazards or discourage employees from using such equipment in the workplace.

If personal protective equipment does not fit properly, an employee may be unprotected or dangerously exposed to hazards and face tragic consequences.

Prioritizing Employee Mental Health

Mental distress has long been a hidden issue in the workplace. Employees are often unaware of the resources – if any – available to help them, while employers may be unaware of the effects mental distress has on safety and their bottom lines.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has brought this issue to the forefront for many employers. Over 40% of Americans report experiencing increases in mental distress due to the pandemic, and over 85% say that work impacts their mental health. Employers are now recognizing the effects of employee mental distress, including increased absenteeism, negative impacts on productivity and profits, and an increase in health care costs.

NSC Recommendations for Employers

NSC recognizes addressing mental distress in the workplace takes the whole organization, including leadership, human resources, supervisors and managers, safety professionals, and of course, employees themselves. Key actions to take include:

- Understanding how workplace conditions and culture can impact employee mental health and, in some cases, create or enhance employee mental distress
- Ensuring leaders, managers and supervisors prioritize employee mental health and wellbeing, work to prevent mental distress, and support employees experiencing mental distress
- Ensuring human resources develops robust, compassionate, and clear policies, programs, and procedures to prevent mental distress and support employees experiencing mental distress
- Providing employee education and increasing awareness on mental wellbeing and distress, as well as awareness of workplace resources, supports and policies

Substance Abuse-How Employers Can Make a Difference

Health care costs for employees who have a substance use disorder are almost double the costs of an average employee with no SUD. The annual cost of an untreated SUD ranges from an average of \$8,255 to \$14,000 per employee, depending on their industry and role.

Employers can take simple steps to protect themselves and their employees, such as:

- Recognizing the impact of drug misuse on the bottom line
- Educating and engaging their workforce on the topic of opioids
- Enacting clear and strong company drug-free workplace policies, and ensuring consistent and comprehensive communication with employees
- Expanding drug panel testing to include opioids
- Training supervisors and employees to spot the first signs of drug misuse and impairment
- Treating substance use disorders as a medical condition that can and should be treated, and ensuring evidence-based treatment mechanisms are covered by employer health care plans
- Leveraging employee assistance programs and other similar resources to help employees return to work, and supporting employees in recovery

Did You Know?

October is Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention Month. Hearing loss is among the most common work-related illnesses. Workers are faced with occupational noise hazards every day. Fortunately, with today's hearing loss prevention strategies and technologies, work-related hearing loss can be nearly always prevented.

Safety Tip of the Month

Report hazardous conditions or equipment to your supervisor.

Notes From the Editor

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