Flu season safety moment: infection control at work

29 CFR 1926.51, 1910.1030, 1926.21, 1910.141

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Think about the last time a cold or the flu went through the crew. How do you think it got started?

Why it matters

Colds, flu and other viruses spread fast when people work close together, share tools and trucks, and eat in the same break area. When a bug goes around, people feel miserable, work falls behind and whoever is left picks up the slack. For some people, like older workers or those with health problems, the flu can be serious. A few simple habits make a real difference.

Key points

1. **Stay home when you are sick**
   Coming to work with a fever, cough or body aches puts everyone around you at risk. Tell your supervisor as early as you can, and follow your company's sick policy. Supervisors, send sick workers home instead of praising them for toughing it out.

2. **Wash your hands the right way**
   Use soap and running water, scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails, then dry with a clean towel or air dryer. Wash before you eat, after the restroom and after you cough, sneeze or blow your nose. Construction sites and permanent general industry workplaces generally must have lavatories with running water, hand soap and individual towels or air blowers (29 CFR 1926.51(f)(3)(i) to (iv) and 29 CFR 1910.141(d)(2)(i) to (iv)).
   29 CFR 1926.51(f)(3)(i)

3. **Cover coughs and keep hands off your face**
   Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow, not your hand, and throw the tissue away. Germs on your hands get in through your eyes, nose and mouth, so try not to touch your face with dirty gloves or hands. Give coworkers who are coughing a little extra space.

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4 Clean what everyone touches

Tool handles, steering wheels, door handles, radios, microwaves and break tables pass germs from hand to hand. Wipe them down often during flu season, and do not share water bottles or cups. The common drinking cup is prohibited (29 CFR 1926.51(a)(4) in construction, 29 CFR 1910.141(b)(1)(vi) in general industry). Permanent general industry workplaces must also be kept clean to the extent the nature of the work allows (29 CFR 1910.141(a)(3)(i)).

29 CFR 1926.51(a)(4)

5 Treat blood and body fluids as infectious

Giving first aid, cleaning up after an injury or handling used needles can expose you to blood. OSHA's general industry bloodborne pathogens standard requires universal precautions, which means treating all human blood and certain body fluids as if they are infectious (29 CFR 1910.1030(b) and (d)(1)). If that exposure is part of your job, your employer must train you, provide protective equipment such as gloves at no cost and make the hepatitis B vaccine available (29 CFR 1910.1030(g)(2)(i), (d)(3)(i) and (f)(1)(i)). Wash your hands immediately or as soon as feasible after you take off your gloves (29 CFR 1910.1030(d)(2)(v)).

29 CFR 1910.1030(d)(1)

6 Keep your defenses up

Sleep, food and water all help your body fight off germs, so try not to run yourself down during flu season. Ask your doctor or pharmacist whether a flu shot is right for you. If you do get sick, rest, and get medical help if you have trouble breathing or you are getting worse instead of better.

Scenario

Picture this: It is the middle of flu season. A carpenter shows up coughing and sneezing because he does not want to lose a day's pay. He drinks from the same cup as a couple of coworkers, passes his drill around and rides to the job in a packed crew truck. By the end of the week, several people are out sick and the job is falling behind. What could he, his coworkers and the foreman have done differently?

Crew discussion

1. Where can we wash our hands on this job, and is there always soap and something to dry with?
2. What does our sick policy say, and who do you call if you wake up sick?
3. Which tools, vehicles or surfaces do we share that should be wiped down more often?
4. If someone gets cut, who gives first aid, and what do they wear to protect themselves?

Bottom line **Stay home when you are sick, wash your hands often, cover your coughs and keep shared things clean.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema: Infection control at work / Control de infecciones en el trabajo

Date / Fecha: _____

Trainer / Instructor: _____ Location / Lugar: _____ Company / Empresa: _____

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