Spring safety moment

29 CFR 1926.651, 1926.451, 1926.1053, 1926.21, 1926.20, 1926.51

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

What changed on this site when the weather started to warm up?

Why it matters

Spring brings thawing ground, heavy rain, sudden storms and a busy schedule all at once. Soil that held firm all winter can turn soft, trenches can fill with water, and winter damage shows up on ladders, scaffolds and equipment. Many crews add new and returning workers in spring, so it is a good time to reset habits.

Key points

1. **Respect thawing ground and wet trenches**
   Thawing, soaked soil gets soft, and trench walls and spoil piles can give way. When workers can be expected to be exposed, a competent person must inspect excavations daily before work starts, and again after every rainstorm or other event that increases the hazard (29 CFR 1926.651(k)(1)). Stay out of a wet trench until it has been checked.
   29 CFR 1926.651(k)(1)

2. **Get down when storms and wind roll in**
   Spring storms can bring high winds, hail and lightning with little warning. Work on or from scaffolds is not allowed during storms or high winds unless a competent person has determined it is safe and workers are protected by a personal fall arrest system or wind screens (29 CFR 1926.451(f)(12)). When you hear thunder, get off ladders, lifts, roofs and steel, and go to a safe shelter.
   29 CFR 1926.451(f)(12)

3. **Watch your footing in mud and rain**
   Mud on your boots makes ladder rungs, steps and steel slick. Clean your boots before you climb, and set ladders on firm, level ground. Ladders may not be used on slippery surfaces unless they are secured or have slip-resistant feet (29 CFR 1926.1053(b)(7)).
   29 CFR 1926.1053(b)(7)

4. **Know the plants and animals on site**
   Warm weather brings out ticks, stinging insects, snakes and plants like poison ivy. Where harmful plants or animals are present, employees who may be exposed must be told about the hazards, how to avoid injury and the first aid to use (29 CFR 1926.21(b)(4)). Wear long sleeves and pants in brush, check for ticks after work, and tell the foreman if you are allergic to stings.
   29 CFR 1926.21(b)(4)

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5 Fix what winter broke

Freezing and thawing can crack concrete, shift scaffold footings and damage cords, hoses and ladders. Inspect tools, equipment and the site before the busy season, and take damaged gear out of service. In construction, safety programs must provide for frequent and regular inspections of job sites, materials and equipment by competent persons (29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2)). During spring cleanup, read the label before using cleaning chemicals, and never mix them.

29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2)

6 Ease into the heat

The first warm days can hit hard because your body has not adjusted to heat yet. Drink water often, take breaks in the shade and watch each other for signs of heat illness. In construction, an adequate supply of drinking water must be provided in all places of employment (29 CFR 1926.51(a)(1)).

29 CFR 1926.51(a)(1)

Scenario

Picture this: after two days of hard rain, the sun is out and the schedule is behind. The trench for the water line has water in the bottom, and the spoil pile looks soft at the edge. The operator wants to send a laborer down to finish one connection before lunch. What has to happen before anyone goes in?

Crew discussion

1. Where does water collect on this site after a rain, and who checks it?
2. What is our plan when thunder or high wind shows up, and who makes the call?
3. Has anyone seen ticks, snakes, wasp nests or poison ivy around here yet?
4. What did winter damage that we have not fixed yet?

Bottom line

Spring conditions change fast, so inspect after every storm, stay out of wet trenches until they are checked, and stop work when the weather turns.

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Spring safety / Seguridad en primavera

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____

Location / Lugar _____

Company / Empresa _____

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