The Utility Connection

Message from the Chair

Hard to believe that we are getting ready for another Professional Development Conference since it feels like we just left Chicago and ASSE’s 100th-anniversary celebration. How time flies! As we prepare for Safety 2012 in Denver, I want to take a look back and a look forward. Two years ago, I was asked to become the Utilities Branch Chair. At our first meeting in Baltimore, three members met to discuss what we should do. Not much was finalized at that meeting other than we committed ourselves to bringing the branch into existence; we did not know what we should be doing. After many phone calls, hours of discussion and hunting for more like-minded individuals, the Advisory Committee formed, began meeting regularly and published our first newsletter. We now meet on a monthly basis via teleconference. Feel free to join us as our call information is listed on page 2.

To make a long story short, we have come a long way. We now have close to 500 members; our goal has been to surpass that by June of this year. With your help, we should meet that objective. We need you to talk to your colleagues and entice them to join. If you are not comfortable approaching a colleague, let David Driver know and he will contact them. We are here to serve you and to help you become better SH&E professionals. The more members we have, the more contributions and collective knowledge sharing.

The Utilities Branch adopted a strategic plan this past year. It outlines our goals and provides a roadmap to becoming a practice specialty. We are working toward producing a webinar in the next year. If you have a particular webinar topic in mind, let us know. Gary Keith and Carl Griffith are working together on this project.

Our Web Chair, Michael Caro is updating information on the website regularly and is contributing to our social media channels. I encourage you to join us on LinkedIn® and Facebook®. Both of these sites facilitate networking with your fellow Utilities Branch members. Additional ASSE announcements are also made through these venues so connect via www.asse.org/connect.

Obviously, this newsletter is another source of information available to members. Michael Carter has worked tirelessly to ensure that it is published on time three times per year. Michael has the hardest job of all advisory committee members. He is constantly looking for and requesting articles from his colleagues here in the Utilities Branch, ASSE and through any other resource he can think of. The best resource, and the hardest one to tap, is
you. Each of us has been working “in the trenches” day in and day out trying to reduce our organizations’ exposure to loss. We have successes and failures. Through these efforts, the rest of us can learn what has worked well and not so well. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of our membership has contributed to our body of knowledge through article submissions. Why is that? Is it because you do not think your accomplishments are noteworthy? You do not feel that others can learn something from you? Well, for what it is worth, I feel you have underestimated your ability to contribute to the greater good. You article, long or short, may just help a fellow member to do his or her job a bit better. ASSE also has an editorial team that helps proofread, edit and format our material, so it is a great opportunity.

During Safety 2012, our open meeting and networking event will be held on Monday, June 4 at 5:30 pm in Room 604. We will have a short meeting to discuss the state of the branch and topics you would like to see the branch tackle in the coming year. Connie Muncy, our Awards and Honors Chair, will then lead a roundtable discussion on hearing conservation. I know that in my agency we are seeing a spike in hearing loss claims by older employees. As our workforce ages, noise-induced hearing loss is fast becoming a big problem. Come to this year’s event and learn how to improve your utility’s hearing conservation program. Share your experiences related to training, policy enforcement, noise evaluation, compliance and any other related issues.

Lastly, I would like to introduce Jessica Vrabel, our new Body of Knowledge (BOK) Chair. Jessica will work with the BOK Committee to identify information and bodies of work that should be added to ASSE’s BOK. The site is another source of information to which ASSE members have access. To gain access, you must first register. It is easy—just click on Click Here to Register, complete the form and begin your search.

Hope to see you in Denver!

Stephen D. Brooks

Utilities Branch
2012 Conference Call Schedule

Third Thursday of every month at 2:30 pm (Central)
Dial-in: (605) 475-3200
Passcode: 986477#
Interview with Carl Griffith

Carl Griffith, CPSM, CUSA, CSHM, CPEA, is Director of Safety and Quality for INTREN, Inc., a utility contractor in Union, IL. In this interview, Griffith discusses INTREN’s safety culture and his role as the company’s on-staff safety authority.

Please provide a brief description of your professional background and your position as Director of Safety and Quality for INTREN, Inc.

I started my safety journey in 1966 when I entered the U.S. Air Force (Fire Safety). I spent 4 years in various locations serving in the military. Upon discharge from the Air Force (1970), I applied for a position (Ground Safety) with the Air Force as a civilian at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, OH. I also started taking classes at Wright State for a degree in Fire Engineering.

I worked there until 1979 when I applied for and received a job as Safety and Loss Control Manager with a local telephone company in Northern Ohio. I was later promoted and transferred to Illinois as the Divisional Safety and Risk Manager serving in that job for 20 years until I was promoted to Corporate Safety and Risk Manager for the company’s wireless division were I spent 5 years until the company was sold.

I left the new company in 1999 and accepted a position with INTREN working as the Director of Safety and Quality. In all this time, I finished my degree and became a Certified Product Safety Manager, Certified Utility Safety Administer, Certified Safety and Health Manager and Certified Professional Environmental Auditor.

I have been an ASSE member since March 1982 and have served on many committees, regions and specialty groups, including the Utilities Branch. I have also served on various groups and committees within the National Safety Council (NSC) and the Underground Contractors Association. I am a recipient of NSC’s Distinguished Service to Safety award, the National Safety Management Society’s Safety Management Professional of the Year award and various other awards. I am also a member of the Veterans of Safety.

In my position as Director of Safety and Quality for INTREN, Inc., I have learned to be a great “juggler.” I think this is necessary to work as a safety professional. When I started my safety career, all I needed to worry about was safety and safety training. Now the job has changed to the point that not only do you concern yourself about safety and training, you have workers’ compensation issues, legal issues, environmental issues, human resources issues and so on. I supervise a team of professionals who deal with all of these issues daily. We are in six states and must work to meet all challenges that surface.

How would you describe INTREN, Inc.’s safety culture?

INTREN began as TRENCH-IT, Inc. in 1989. It was a small company that did trenching and installed electrical house services and over the past few years has grown into a large company that does underground electrical packages, overhead electrical lines and gas distribution. As a growing company, we are trying to find our new safety culture and to break away from our old safety culture. We are working hard to make the change.

What occupational SH&E challenges is the utility industry facing today?

We are facing a shortage of qualified electrical (linemen) employees for the work that is out on the horizon. No new employees are coming up through the unions to do this type of work. Working journeymen are aging and will be moving on with no one to take their place.

What issues are most important to Utilities Branch members?

I think most of us face time issues and how to get more done with less. We are facing an aging infrastructure with much to accomplish with a shortage of experienced workers. This means bringing on new employees and training them to do dangerous work safely. Also, all of the OSHA changes and mandates. Workers’ compensation claims affect both dollars and employees not on the job.
What are the greatest challenges you face in your position with INTREN, Inc.?

My greatest challenge is time—how can I work the plan that I set out for myself and meet my goals? There is not much time for anything else. Planning is also important. Develop a plan and then work at it each day. If you drift away from the plan, you must be disciplined enough to get yourself back on track.

How do safety hazards within the utility industry differ based on the type of energy source?

As a contractor, we work for many utility companies, mainly electrical and gas. We have an established safety program; however, we must submit a safety plan for each job that we do. This plan outlines the hazards that we will or could face in completing the job. Part of the plan is to complete a job safety brief each day along with a stand down before the start of the job.

Some of the work that we do is dangerous at times and leaves no room for mistakes. We work each day with high-voltage electric and high-volume gas mains. We build large electrical grid systems for wind farms and electrical distribution systems, both aerial and underground, for major utility companies. We face hazards of employees making accidental contact with high-voltage electrical conductors or flash burns from accidental contact from cables. We work in enclosed manholes or vaults that contain large electrical systems. Some are old and in bad shape where the cable will or could fault when you are working in the vault or manhole. We are called in to repair electrical grid systems after storms and other natural disasters. You never know what you may encounter when working in a storm.

Do renewable energy sources present any unique SH&E hazards?

We work on renewable energy projects; however, we are one of the first contractors on site building the electrical infrastructure so the work is similar to what we do every day. However, because we are so remote, we face some environmental issues that we do not normally face. In one state, we encountered rattlesnakes in a location where there were no medical facilities nearby and in some locations, equipment breakdowns pose a problem.

As a specialty contractor, how does INTREN, Inc. maintain sound SH&E practices across all of its worksites?

We have a sound training program for all supervisory and field employees. We have a team of safety professionals in the field each day monitoring for compliance. We develop a safety plan for each job that we are on, and part of the plan is for each crew to develop and follow a daily safety job brief. These job briefs are audited to ensure that they are completed each day and have much thought put into them. When a visitor arrives on the job, s/he must be fully briefed and must verify that they understand the hazards of the work being done and where they cannot go. All supervisors take the OSHA 30-hour course, and our field people take the OSHA 10-hour course. All rank and files must conduct many field safety audits, and our insurance carrier also conducts random field audits of all job sites. All new hire employees must attend a 5-hour safety orientation and pass a drug test before they are allowed on a job site. Also, each employee is subject to random drug and alcohol testing each month. We provide employees with PPE to complete their job safely along with a fire-resistant (FR) clothing program that employees can use to order FR clothing they need to do their job.

As INTREN, Inc.’s on-staff safety authority, how do you ensure that you always present the latest SH&E information to employees? How do you stay up-to-date on the latest rules, regulations and standards?

Over the years, I have built up a vast network of peers whom I can contact for answers to difficult problems. The safety professionals who work for INTREN are expected to attend training classes and seminars to stay current. We conduct safety stand downs each week to ensure that all employees stay up-to-date on all aspects of the job. We also use this time to receive feedback from all employees and to answer any questions they may have. We have many services that provide us with updates on all OSHA rules and regulations. Attending ASSE’s annual professional development conference (PDC) helps greatly.

In what ways do you think safety can be improved within the utility industry?

Safety in the utilities industry swings up and down depending on the safety challenges at the time. When many safety concerns exist, the industry invests much capital and resources to help solve the problems and when things improve, resources and capital are pulled away until things start to slip again. It would appear that safety should be handled more upstream; we cannot do much about what has happened except learn from it. However, if we concentrate our efforts on the prevention part and provide the same amount of effort and resources on preventing injuries, then our workers’ compensation numbers would be lower.
Someone should develop a training program for all leaders to focus on safety and to show, from a management perspective, how having a great safety program adds to the bottom line.

Based on your experience, how can Utilities Branch members make the most of the branch’s resources and networking opportunities?

Based on my experience, I would say that you should get involved with your chapter or the branch by attending meetings and networking with other members who attend. Join committees and attend the PDC both at a local level and through the national level.

ASSE provides many opportunities for members to get involved and learn. Chapters and branches can help guide the way.

Safety 2012

This year’s conference will be held in Denver, CO, from June 3-6, 2012. Visit www.safety2012.org for full conference details and to register. Members receive discounted rates! To see a complete listing of utility-related sessions, visit the “sessions” page and sort by track.

Planning

- Click here for an interactive map of hotels near the convention center.
- Visit Google Maps, enter “Denver, CO” in the search bar and “search nearby” for local attractions and restaurants.
- Contact ASSE’s Colorado Chapter with any Colorado-related questions.

Utilities Open Meeting & Networking Event

Monday, June 4 at 5:30 pm (Convention Center, Room 604)
Enjoy technical discussions, a hearing conservation roundtable, Q&A and networking!
Utility Safety Certifications
By Michael Caro

Sometimes it seems that there are as many different types of professional certifications as there are professionals. They run the gamut from one end of the spectrum to the other. Specialists in virtually any chosen field have a key credential (or credentials) that help them stand out among their peers. This does not seem to be particularly true, however, for utility safety professionals.

The top of the heap for any safety professional is, of course, the CSP (Certified Safety Professional); which is offered through and controlled by the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP). The CSP is recognized in every developed country as our highest certification—short of a graduate degree, usually a Ph.D. But the CSP is not specialized and does not offer specialty tracks for certification.

Other recognized certifications for safety professionals include the Occupational Health and Safety Technician (OHST) and the Construction Health and Safety Technician (CHST). Both are also offered through BCSP and are widely recognized (although not as prestigious as the CSP). Neither is specific to our industry nor do they offer utility tracks.

A group called the Association of Energy Engineers offers a variety of certifications for professionals working in the energy field, but they are primarily concerned with the business and management aspects of the power industry rather than safety. See their offerings here or visit www.aeecenter.org and decide for yourself if one of them is a fit.

Many utility safety professionals hold a certification from the National Safety Council (NSC)—the Certified Utility Safety Administrator (CUSA). However, although NSC still maintains a Utility Division, the certification was discontinued in 2009 and is no longer available. Those who qualified for the credential prior to the cutoff date were grandfathered in and will not lose NSC support for the certification, but no new certifications have been issued nor are there any plans afoot to revive it.

The termination of NSC’s program left a gaping void for safety professionals in our industry. Fortunately, some leading safety people working for utilities and contractors around the country took notice and took up the mantel. Under the auspices of Incident Prevention magazine and Carla Housh, the Utility Safety and Ops Leadership Network (USOLN) was formed with one primary goal in mind: create an accredited professional safety certification credential for those in utility industries. The result of their efforts is the Certified Utility Safety Professional (CUSP). The first group of CUSPs was awarded in May 2010 at the convention in Denver. Since then, CUSP workshops and test dates have been held all over the country. Network leaders work closely with ANSI to ensure that the credential stays on track for certification, and there is every reason to believe that they will be successful. And many of the best-known utility companies in the nation are on board and working toward certification for their safety professionals. And the CUSP is offered in two tracks—green for safety pros and blue for operations personnel. Check out USOLN’s website for more info.

While there are limited choices specific to our industry, well-respected and widely recognized certifications are still available. The bottom line is to be sure that any credential you seek is backed up by a reputable organization—BCSP, ABIH, ANSI, etc. As utility safety professionals grow in number and gain footing within the profession, we can begin to insist that we be recognized with more certifications all our own. ASSE’s Utilities Branch and USOLN are two groups that are making that happen.

Michael Caro is Director of Safety and Training at UtiliX Corporation and Website Chair for the Utilities Branch.
Risk Management Issues & Sleep
By Stephen D. Brooks, CSP, ARM

“There is a time for many words, and there is also a time for sleep. “
—Homer

March 5–11, 2012 was National Sleep Awareness Week®, an event sponsored by the National Sleep Foundation. It is said that we spend approximately one third of our lives in bed, hopefully sleeping, which some people seem to think is a waste of time. But sleep is an important part of our lives. While we sleep, our body restores itself and our minds sort through what is happening in our lives and helps us make sense of it all.

From a safety and risk management perspective, lack of and poor-quality sleep is a contributing factor in employee injuries and motor vehicle collisions. Studies have indicated that sleep deprivation can be just as damaging to cognitive thinking as being intoxicated. We as safety professionals need to look at our high-risk groups and analyze our loss histories to determine what our exposures really are. These groups include employees who drive and operate equipment. This article includes a review of what makes up a good night’s sleep, disordered sleep and the health effects of sleep deprivation.

Sleep Components
Sleep is made up of two types that cycle through about every 90 minutes. These are commonly called non-rapid eye movement (NREM) and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. NREM makes up about 75% of the night and is made up of four stages.

Stage 1
- Between being awake and falling asleep, light sleep

Stage 2
- Onset of sleep
- Becoming disengaged from surroundings
- Breathing and heart rate are regular
- Body temperature drops (so sleeping in a cool room is helpful)

Stages 3 & 4
- Deepest and most restorative sleep
- Blood pressure drops
- Breathing becomes slower
- Muscles are relaxed
- Blood supply to muscles increases
- Tissue growth and repair occurs
- Energy is restored
- Hormones are released, such as growth hormone, essential for growth and development, including muscle development

REM
REM makes up the remaining 25% of the night. The first period occurs about 90 minutes after falling asleep and recurs about every 90 minutes. Each period gets longer later in the night.

- Provides energy to brain and body
- Supports daytime performance
- Brain is active and dreams occur
- Eyes dart back and forth
- Body becomes immobile and relaxed, as muscles are turned off

Risk Management & Insurance
Interested in risk management and insurance issues? ASSE has 29 industry and common interest groups, including the Risk Management/Insurance Practice Specialty.

Visit www.asse.org/ps/rmi for more information.
The amount of sleep you need depends on various factors, especially your age. Consider these general guidelines for different age groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Recommended Amount of Sleep</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants</td>
<td>14 to 15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers</td>
<td>12 to 14 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-age children</td>
<td>10 to 11 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>7 to 9 hours</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some people think that they need less sleep than this, but they are just fooling themselves. When I am training my agency’s employees, I poll them to see how many of them get a full night’s sleep. I consistently get a 50% response for less than 6 hours of sleep and about 20% of employees getting 7 to 9 hours. When I ask them if they sleep in on the weekends, they almost all indicate that they sleep in, some as late as noon on both Saturday and Sunday. They are paying back their sleep deficit.

Sleep Disorders
There are those, like myself, who have disordered sleep. The most common sleep disorders are:

- Insomnia is a sleep disorder of difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep.

- Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder that occurs when a person’s breathing is interrupted during sleep. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep, sometimes hundreds of times during the night. Sleep apnea can be caused by the collapse of the airway during inhalation—obstructive sleep apnea—or by a neurological condition caused by the brain failing to signal the diaphragm to breathe—central sleep apnea.

- Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a sleep disorder that causes tingling, pulling, creeping or painful sensations in the legs at night. This sensation is brought on by resting, such as lying down in bed, or sitting for prolonged periods, such as during while driving or at a theatre. RLS typically occurs in the evening, making it difficult to fall asleep.

- Narcolepsy is a neurological disorder of sleep regulation that affects the control of sleep and wakefulness. People with narcolepsy experience excessive daytime sleepiness and intermittent, uncontrollable episodes of falling asleep during the daytime.

To be diagnosed with a sleep disorder, a doctor evaluates the patient’s health history and sleep habits. S/he may prescribe a sleep study or polysomnogram (PSG). The results of my study showed that I have moderate obstructive sleep apnea. I had complained to my primary physician that I was constantly tired and cranky. I consistently felt like nodding off while driving home from work every day, and forget about driving at night for any length of time. It turns out that I was waking up about 25 times an hour all night long, which is once every two to three minutes. I never got any Stage 4 or REM sleep. I was sleep-deprived.

If I did not get treatment for this condition, I would likely get one or more of the chronic diseases associated with sleep deprivation, including:

- High blood pressure or high blood pressure in your lungs
- An abnormal heart rhythm, heart failure, coronary artery disease or stroke
- Depression
- Diabetes
Of the four sleep disorders reviewed, only obstructive sleep apnea has identifiable risk factors, including obesity, older workers, a large neck size (17 in. or greater in a man or 16 in. or greater in a woman), smoking and alcohol use and snoring. Ethnicity may also have a role; high-risk groups include African-Americans, Pacific Islanders and Hispanics.

**Shift Workers**
Shift workers are constantly fighting the body’s natural circadian rhythm, our natural 24-hour clock of wakefulness during daylight hours and sleep at night. The main complaint for people with shift-work sleep disorder is excessive sleepiness. Other symptoms include:

- Insomnia
- Disrupted sleep schedules
- Reduced performance
- Difficulties with personal relationships
- Irritability/depressed mood

There is no treatment for shift-work issues. There are only coping methods, including:

- Wearing dark glasses to block out the sunlight on your way home
- Keeping to the same bedtime and wake time schedule, especially on weekends
- Eliminating noise and light from the sleep environment (use eye masks and earplugs)
- Avoiding caffeinated beverages and foods close to bedtime
- Avoiding alcohol, although it may seem to improve sleep initially, tolerance develops quickly and it will soon disturb sleep

**Extended Shifts**
Working M-F/9-5 in a manual job bad enough, but as utilities, we work in all kinds of weather as well. Of course, emergencies do not just happen during daylight hours during the work week. At times, our crews must work overtime and can be called back to work. On top of that, the regular day-to-day work must be completed. Each utility needs to evaluate its exposure to employees who work long hours for days at a time. Supervisors need to be given the tools to evaluate workers for signs of fatigue and lack of sleep. Agencies need to develop systems to provide for “sleepy workers” who are too tired to drive home. Not only is there the exposure to employee injury, but there is also the exposure of injuring members of the public when sleep-deprived employees drive home after extended shifts.

**Controlling the Risks**
All employers, including utilities, need to identify sleepy employees. Individual departments or entire agencies can establish policies regarding shift work and extended shifts and can educate employees. Establishing a health management (wellness) program that includes educating employees on working fatigued and sleep disorders is one venue for controlling daytime sleepiness. An appropriate setting can also be the commercial driver license physical examination. Doctors performing these evaluations need to ask employees questions regarding daytime sleepiness and sleep habits.

**Sources**
- [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)
- [www.clevelandclinic.org](http://www.clevelandclinic.org)
- [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)
- [www.cdc.gov/sleep/](http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/)
- [http://stanfordhospital.org/clinicsmedServices/clinics/sleep/sleep_disorders/shift-work.html](http://stanfordhospital.org/clinicsmedServices/clinics/sleep/sleep_disorders/shift-work.html)
- [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

**Stephen D. Brooks, CSP, ARM,** is a Safety Officer at San Francisco Water Power Sewer and Chair of ASSE’s **Utilities Branch.**
Workplace Slips, Trips & Falls: All of Us Are Susceptible

By Michael K. Carter, CSP

Workplace slips, trips and falls can be serious. They take more than 700 lives on average in the workplace each year in this country, and more than 300,000 of these injuries result in absence from work every year.

Occupational fatalities caused by falls continue to be a serious public health problem. The U.S. Department of Labor lists falls as one of the leading causes of traumatic occupational death, accounting for 8% of all occupational fatalities from trauma. According to OSHA, any time a worker is at a height of 4 ft. or more, the worker is at risk and needs to be protected. OSHA states that fall protection must be provided at 4 ft. in general industry, 5 ft. in maritime and 6 ft. in construction. However, regardless of the fall distance, fall protection must be provided when working over dangerous equipment and machinery.

Most incidents are preventable with general precautions and safety measures. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that fatal falls declined by 2% in 2010 (from 645 in 2009 to 635 in 2010). Overall, fatal falls are down 25% from the series high of 847 fatal falls reported in 2007.

Following are some tips to help maintain safety by preventing accidental slips, trips and falls:

- Conduct regular, frequent inspections of work and walkway areas to identify environment and equipment hazards, which could cause slips, trips and falls. Pay special attention to the working and walking surfaces, housekeeping, lighting, visibility, stairways and ladders.
- Provide safety training on the prevention of slips, trips and falls. Place emphasis on proper walking, carrying, climbing and descending stairways, ladders, vehicles and equipment.
- Wear proper footwear for the work and environment whether in the office, shop, plant, warehouse, training or in transit.
- Be sure to thoroughly investigate slips, trips and falls, with or without injury, so that appropriate actions can be taken to prevent a repeat occurrence.
- Use a designated walkway. If the walkway is obstructed, take the safest alternate path. If there is no safe alternate path, do not go there.
- Keep eyes on path. Eyes should be looking where the next step is going to be.
- Use a handhold to ensure safety, especially when climbing up a stair or ladder or over a pipe/obstruction. Before you proceed, establish hand contact with a handrail or a solid object to balance your movement and to catch yourself if you lose balance.
- Maintain awareness of slippery conditions and take actions to remove the hazard.
- Eliminate the need for fall protection where possible by rescheduling, isolating or changing the task.
- Ensure that fall protection equipment is appropriate for the work, in good condition, and used properly.
- Conduct regular inspections of fall protection equipment in accordance with manufacturer’s recommendations and OSHA requirements.
It does not hurt to always think, “What is the worst that could happen?” as you go about your everyday tasks, even the routine ones. Think about it, when was the last time it did not hurt when you slipped, tripped or fell?

Michael K. Carter, CSP, is a Program Assessment Specialist at the Tennessee Valley Authority and Publication Coordinator for ASSE’s Utilities Branch.

Interested in Presenting at Safety 2013?

If you are interested in presenting at Safety 2013, please keep in mind that proposals are due by July 13, 2012. For more information, click here. You can either submit online or by e-mailing pdcspeaker@asse.org. If you would like to be sponsored by the Utilities Branch, please send your proposal to ksonneson@asse.org indicating your interest.

Upcoming Live Webinars

The ANSI A10.1 Standard: Pre-Project & Pre-Task Safety & Health Planning
May 9, 2012, 11:00 am-12:30 pm (Central)

Zero Accidents Was the Goal of...the Titanic!
July 18, 2012, 11:00 am-12:30 pm (Central)

Timely Ergonomics: Age Considerations
August 8, 2012, 11:00 am-12:30 pm (Central)

On-Demand

Rethink Safety
Changing Behaviors
Global Safety Conference
The CSP Experience
The Role of Safety in Sustainability
Best Practices in Fire Safety
Law for Safety Professionals
Preventing PPE Failures
By Connie Muncy, CIH, REM, MS

Keep your employees safe by avoiding five common pitfalls of PPE:

- Employees wearing outdated/worn/ineffective PPE
- No enforcement of the PPE program
- Overlooking employee PPE needs
- Failure to update the PPE program at least annually
- Ill-fitting PPE

Establish & Post PPE Replacement Schedules

I once walked into a jobsite and noticed that the logo on employee hardhats was one that the organization had not used in more than 12 years. As it turned out, employees were unaware that many PPE items have a limited useful lifespan, beyond which they become ineffective. Another time, I walked onto a production floor and asked employees how often they replaced the cushions on their earmuffs. They responded that they were not aware that the cushions could or should be changed, that theirs were about 7 years old and their stockroom did not carry these. Be sure that your employees understand the time-sensitive nature of PPE items. Avoid the pitfall of old, ineffective PPE by establishing and posting an appropriate PPE replacement schedule for your organization (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample PPE replacement schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XYZ CORPORATION PPE REPLACEMENT SCHEDULE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PPE Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Visibility Vest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synthetic Fiber Fall Protection Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hardhat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single-Use Earplugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard plastic earplugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banded earplugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earmuff-style hearing protectors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rubber insulating gloves | Retest before first use and every 6 months thereafter; if electrically tested but not issued for service, it may not be placed into service unless it has been electrically tested within the previous 12 months.

Rubber insulating sleeves | Retest before first use and every 12 months thereafter; if electrically tested but not issued for service, it may not be placed into service unless it has been electrically tested within the previous 12 months.

Make sure that your stockroom has a good system for ensuring that all needed PPE is in stock, and that second- and third-shift employees have a way to access needed PPE. Also when purchasing PPE, be cautious about the age and condition of the stock you are purchasing. One purchasing agent told me about an occurrence when she purchased new hardhats to replenish her stock, only to find that when they arrived, the dates stamped on them were already more than 5 years old.

PPE Enforcement
I once conducted an accident investigation on an employee who had lost an eye. Believe me when I say that this is one life-changing accident that no safety professional ever wants to investigate, and those who do will never forget the experience. The employee had been properly trained to wear a face shield over safety glasses, and in fact, the employee had the correct PPE in his possession and was aware of the requirement to use it. He just chose not to wear it, and no supervisor ever discussed the matter with the employee. Just a few well-placed words from a supervisor can avoid many a needless tragedy. Be certain that supervisors clearly understand and enforce your PPE policy. Your supervisors truly are the keystone of your safety program; they are the ones who clearly understand the work being done as well as the characteristics of the employees doing the work, and who monitor both on an ongoing basis.

Do Not Overlook Needed PPE
I once asked a groundskeeper whether he ever used a chainsaw, and indeed he did. When asked whether he wore chainsaw chaps and a chainsaw face shield, the answer was no, he did not and the stock room did not carry these items. How very hazardous to work without these basic safety precautions and imagine the result if something went wrong. To make sure that PPE needs do not slip between the cracks, be sure to complete comprehensive Job hazard analyses for all positions and be sure to include both supervisors and line staff in the process. The line staff often has an important perspective or information that even the supervisor may not have; be certain to capture that information. Also have a mechanism in place to capture any new or changed processes as well.

Do Not Let History Repeat Itself
Sadly people will flush just about anything down the commode, including hypodermic needles. Those needles sometimes end up in wastewater treatment plant pumps and clarifiers where sooner or later, they are bound to be encountered by employees. In reviewing one organization’s PPE logs, three needlestick injuries came to light, all preventable. The end result was an update to the PPE program with the subsequent issuance of needlestick-resistant gloves, puncture-resistant insoles and kneepads to the affected employees together with placement of sharps containers in the bathrooms; no further needlestick injuries were observed. Review OSHA logs and update your PPE program no less than annually.

Be Certain PPE Fits Properly
Many of us have seen the situation where, as a cost-saving measure, a department has just one fall protection harness, or one pair of electrician’s gloves or one arc flash suit to be shared by all. Ill-fitting PPE will not protect employees; in fact, it can harm them. I visited one site where the standard-sized floatation vests that were available
for working over water were not sufficient for larger-sized employees. Make sure that employees have access to properly fitting PPE.

**Summary**
The reasons that employees need PPE in the first place is that a very real hazard exists and that hazard could not be eliminated through engineering controls or administrative controls, making the PPE absolutely essential. Complacency hurts and kills. Using shortcuts never ends well either. Do not let your workplace become complacent or take shortcuts when it comes to proper PPE. Following the advice given in this article will help your organization keep its employees going home safely after every shift, every time.

*Connie Muncy, CIH, REM,* is a Safety Officer at Montgomery County Environmental Services.

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**Utilities Branch Spotlight**

Utilities Branch Advisory Committee member, Connie Muncy, was recently selected to receive the Affiliate Societies Council of Dayton’s 2012 Outstanding Engineers and Scientists Award. Also, her work as ASSE’s 2010-2011 President of the Kitty Hawk Chapter during ASSE’s 100th anniversary and the Kitty Hawk Chapter’s 25th anniversary led to the chapter recently receiving the Small Chapter of the Year award. Her success has led to her alma mater, the University of Findlay (School of Environment, Safety and Health Management), using her in their advertising campaign to highlight esteemed alumni. After all of these accomplishments, Muncy continues to contribute to the profession—recently presenting at the National Hearing Conservation Association’s 2012 Annual Meeting.

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**Body of Knowledge Tutorial**

ASSE’s new Body of Knowledge (BoK) wiki-like searchable database is now available to all members. To help you get the most from this new resource, we are providing a recording of an introductory and instructional tutorial to get you started.

**Standard Version:**
[hassevirtualclassroom.org/BOK/index.html](http://hassevirtualclassroom.org/BOK/index.html)

**iPhone/iPad Version:**
[www.assevirtualclassroom.org/BOK/media/bokWebinars.mp4](http://www.assevirtualclassroom.org/BOK/media/bokWebinars.mp4)

**www.safetybok.org**
**OSHA Mobile App to Protect Workers from Heat**

As part of OSHA’s continuing educational efforts about the dangers of extreme heat, as of August 2011, the agency now offers a free application for mobile devices that enables workers and supervisors to monitor the heat index at their worksites in order to prevent heat-related illnesses.

“Summer heat presents a serious issue that affects some of the most vulnerable workers in our country, and education is crucial to keeping them safe,” says Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “Heat-related illnesses are preventable. This app is just one way the Labor Department is getting that message out.”

The app, available in English and Spanish, combines heat index data from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with the user’s location to determine necessary protective measures. Based on the risk level of the heat index, the app provides users with information about precautions they may take, such as drinking fluids, taking rest breaks and adjusting work operations. Users also can review the signs and symptoms of heat stroke, heat exhaustion and other heat-related illnesses and can learn about first-aid steps to take in an emergency. Information for supervisors is also available through the app on how to gradually build up the workload for new workers as well as how to train employees on heat illness signs and symptoms. Additionally, users can contact OSHA directly through the app.

The app is designed for devices using an Android platform, and versions for BlackBerry and iPhone users are in the works. To download it, visit [http://go.usa.gov/KFE](http://go.usa.gov/KFE).

More than 30 workers died from heat stroke in 2010. Thousands become ill from heat exhaustion and other heat illnesses every year. Some of the highest illness rates occur among construction workers, farmworkers, roofers, landscapers, baggage handlers and other air transportation workers.

Effective heat illness prevention requires simple planning. Employers are responsible for protecting workers by providing plenty of water, scheduling rest breaks in the shade or air-conditioned spaces, planning heavy work early in the day, preparing for medical emergencies, training workers about heat and other job hazards, taking steps to help workers—especially those who are new to working outdoors or who have been away from work for a period of time—acclimatize to the heat and gradually increasing workloads or allowing more frequent breaks during the first week of an outdoor project.

Information for employers about using the heat index to calculate and address risks posed to workers also is available through OSHA’s web-based tool “Using the Heat Index: Employer Guidance,” which is accessible at [http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/index.html). OSHA’s other educational and training tools about heat illnesses prevention, available in English and Spanish, can be found at [http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html).

“OSHA’s prevention message is clear: Water. Rest. Shade. These are three little words that make a big difference for outdoor workers during the hot summer months,” says Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA David Michaels.

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**Publication Archives**

We are happy to announce that Practice Specialty, Branch and Common Interest Group publications are now archived in the [Members Only](http://www.osha.gov) section under Resources. Find past publications for all of the groups you belong to in one place!
Welcome New Members

We want to thank everyone who has remained a loyal member of the Utilities Branch and welcome the following members who recently joined. We are currently at 439 members and growing. If you have any colleagues who might be interested in joining the branch, please contact Krista Sonneson to request an information packet. If you know anyone who might be interested in joining ASSE, please contact customer service.

Thomas Arnold, Professional Safety Solutions LLC
Robert Bailey
Linda Baird, Corning Sullivan Park
John Bannen, Severn Trent Services
Scott Beauchesne, Collier County Government
Natalie Berger, Dynegy Midwest Generation
Christopher Bland
Daniel Blankfeld
Raymond Breton
James Brewer
Bernard Brewer, FRG Corp.
Rickey Bridges, Owens Corning
Allen Brown, Dominion Energy New England
Jason Brown
Mark Calub, Pacific Gas & Electric Company
Eugene Chimblo
Larren Clemons, Battelle Energy Alliance
Frank Cook
Thomas Dahl
George Daly, Tetra Tech Const.
L.V. Davis, Transcanada
Jarret Eamiello
James Foley
Michael Garrett
Donald Garvey, 3M
Kelvin Gray
Phillip Green, Centerpoint Energy
Sean Griffith
Thomas Grube, PPL Generation
Jeff Hammond, XCEL Energy Hayden Station
Nick Heaylo
Charles Hendry, Austin Energy
Gail House, Walt Disney World
Richard Howard, MYRGROUP
Jon Hunter
Sreedharan Jayachandran, M/S Quick Mix Beton LLC
Marty Jones, Indiana Statewide Assoc. of Rural Electric
Garrett Keane

Garry Kepes, BP Pipeline & Logistics
William Komianos
Fernand Kuhr, San Diego Gas & Electric
James Lange
James Lewis
Jeffrey Loft, Williams Electric Co. Inc.
Bruce Lushbough, NRG Energy
Stanley McDaniel
Gerald McPherson
Raymond Micallaf, Hydro One Networks Inc.
Dimitrios Mihou
Deane Mills, IAP Worldwide Services
James Moore, Pacific Gas & Electric Company
Robert Narvaez, ABB
Bryan O’Dea, Welch & Rushe Inc.
Jonathan Parker
Ronald Powell, Memphis Light Gas & Water Div.
Jessica Reece
Erik Rhein
Eugene Russell
Jason Schwartzhoff, Midamerican Energy
William Schweikhard
J.E. Selvey, WorleyParsons
Barbara Siler, North American Substation Services
Chad Stuart
Matt Thompson, Safety Engineering & Health Services
Katherine Tull, WorkSafeBC
William Unrath
Santiago Velasco
Jessica Vrabel
Michael Wasson
Scott Weichler, Exelon PBAPS
Jarold Witherspoon
Peter Wong, Syngenta Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
Leonard Wong
Kirk Wulf, Great River Energy
Anthony Xochihua, Sempra Pipelines & Storage
Richard Zellen, Willis North America

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New Health & Wellness Branch

ASSE’s Healthcare Practice Specialty (HPS) now sponsors a new Health & Wellness Branch due to the connection between safety and health and wellness. The branch will establish a knowledge base, tools and resources to help SH&E professionals influence employees to make appropriate lifestyle choices; employers to provide appropriate tools, programs and infrastructure that will facilitate appropriate employee lifestyle choices; and employers to recognize SH&E professionals’ contributions as value-added to their organizations.

Health & Wellness Branch membership is FREE to all HPS members. Members who do not belong to HPS can join for $20 and then join the Health & Wellness Branch for free so you get two for the price of one! To join this new branch, contact customer service at (847) 699-2929 or visit www.asse.org/JoinGroups.

To view a complimentary copy of the Health & Wellness Branch’s inaugural issue of Wellness Report, its triannual publication, click here.

Resource Snapshot

Utilities Information: www.asse.org/ps/utilities
Body of Knowledge: www.safetybok.org
Journal of SH&E Research: www.asse.org/AcademicsJournal
International Resource Guide: www.asse.org/IRG
Networking Opportunities: www.asse.org/connect
Publication Opportunities: www.asse.org/ps/write
Volunteer Opportunities: www.asse.org/ps/volunteers

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