

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF LABOR DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Emergency & Fire Prevention Plans for Nursing Homes

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Today, emergency plans are on nursing home administrators minds. More and more frequently, government and businesses are involved in emergency situations and are being caught unprepared. Administrators are asking the question, "How shall we prepare for emergencies to minimize human pain and loss and property damage?" In this article we are going to focus on the requirements for nursing homes to prepare effective emergency action and fire prevention plans.

Nursing homes today provide skilled care to patients who may or may not be able to evacuate themselves. Therefore, the nursing home has the responsibility of providing for the safety of the patients and for the employees. As we all know, in the last decade major nursing home fires have occurred in Hartford, Connecticut and Nashville, Tennessee. Neither nursing home had automatic sprinkler systems and a

total of 31 residents died.

Prior to these events, nursing homes had an option to follow the 1967 edition of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code. Now all

nursing homes have to adopt the 2000 edition of the NFPA Life Safety Code, an updated version of the fire code.

According to the State of Connecticut Public Act No. 05-187 "Not later than July 31, 2006, each chronic and convalescent nursing home or rest home with nursing supervision licensed pursuant to Chapter 368v shall have a complete automatic fire extinguishing system." In addition, the act requires all nursing homes to submit a plan for employee fire safety training and education to the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and to the Department of Labor (DOL) by July 1, 2005. This plan shall at a minimum comply with standards promulgated by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) including but not limited to standards listed in 29 CFR 1910.38, 1910.39, and 1910.157, as adopted pursuant to chapter 571 of the general statutes, or 29 USC Section 651.

According to the DPH, the State of Connecticut has a total of 249 nursing homes. Out of these, 198 have complete sprinkler protection, 39 have partial sprinkler protection and 12 have no sprinkler protection. These 12 nursing homes are now working with the state and are in the process of installing sprinkler systems.



OSHA requires that all employers **develop and implement** an emergency action and fire prevention plan. Most nursing homes have plans but deficiencies are common and some examples of the most common deficiencies discovered during CONN-OSHA consultations are listed below.

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Emergency & Fire Prevention

- Training drills become routine and employees are not aware of the details.
- The plans are not updated for the changes in staff, structure, and/or in specific details of the plan.
- Employees of 2nd and 3rd shifts are not trained.
- Temporary employees are not trained.
- Employees are responsible for too many things such as: evacuating the patients with their needed equipment (like oxygen), evacuating themselves, informing local fire and/or ambulance services and other nursing homes, etc.
- The drills are not comprehensive, therefore administration and employees are not aware of the fact that the plan, the way it is developed, is not feasible to implement.
- Equipment is not checked thoroughly.
- The plan does not include details for other emergencies such as natural disasters, medical emergencies, violence, etc.
- Most of the time a generic non-site specific plan is acquired. For an emergency action and fire prevention plan to be effective it is crucial that the plan be site specific.



In addition to these considerations, some **structural considerations** are also important to minimize the spread and damage due to fire. Air handling systems are required to shut down automatically when the fire alarm is triggered to prevent the spread of smoke. Vertical openings or penetrations between floors are required to be protected. In one fire incidence, plumbing penetrated the ceiling of a group shower room and this unprotected vertical opening allowed smoke to migrate to upper floors in the building.

The emergency action and fire prevention plan should be site-specific. Training should be conducted utilizing the developed plan for **all** employees. During the training if any deficiencies in the plan surface or ideas to improve the plan come up, these issues should be evaluated and the plan should be updated accordingly. Follow up training should be performed on a regular basis.

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Hazard Corner...

Fatality occurs while trimming trees



A grounds maintenance worker lost his life while cutting down a tree in Southern Connecticut. A three-man grounds maintenance crew was working clearing brush and trees from a fence line in a park; the ground was covered with snow.

The victim was working at ground level using a chain saw to cut down an 18" diameter oak tree. The upper branches of this oak tree were tangled with vines that also entangled the upper limbs of a nearby cherry tree. As the oak tree was cut through, these vines acted like ropes binding the two trees together. The cherry tree now supported the weight of the two trees. Unfortunately, the base of the cherry tree was rotted and could not support the load and both trees fell.

According to witness statements, when the cherry tree began to fall, the victim attempted to flee but slipped on the snow. The falling trees struck him while he was lying on the ground. The victim was transported to a local hospital by ambulance where he succumbed to his injuries.

A review of the incident revealed that a workplace hazard assessment of the site had not been performed and that the employees had not been trained in chain saw safety. Before beginning any job, it is essential that a hazard assessment to identify actual and potential hazards be performed and that the employees be trained in the safe use of all equipment. Appropriate personal protective equipment must also be selected and used to ensure adequate employee protection at all times.



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CONN-OSHA's Cooperative SHARP & Alliance Programs



CONN-OSHA's Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) is a program developed to recognize small business employers with exemplary safety and health programs. If your business employs less than 250 employees at one site and have not more

than 500 employees at all sites nationwide, are on OSHA's high-hazard list or special emphasis program list, be a single-fixed site, have been in business for at least one year and have injuries and illness rates below the national average for your industry, your company may be eligible to participate in SHARP. To be accepted into SHARP is a great achievement and sets you apart from your business peers. Once you have received your SHARP status, your worksite will be exempt from programmed inspections during the certification period.

The journey to SHARP status comes about through a process in which CONN-OSHA's consultation staff conducts an initial assessment of a company interested in participating. The company then knows how well it is managing safety and health and has identified its strengths and weaknesses. This allows the company to focus its energy, develop an action plan and begin working toward its goal. CONN-OSHA staff will return, as needed, to provide assistance and guidance. When the company is ready, a consultant conducts a final assessment, and, if the company qualifies, recommends it for SHARP approval. SHARP approval lasts one to two years. In order to re-qualify, SHARP companies are expected to work toward continuous improvement of their safety and health management systems. Current SHARP members include:

- Wafios Machinery Corporation, Branford, Conn.
- Cooper-Atkins Corporation, Middlefield, Conn.
- Nutmeg Container Corporation, Inc., Putnam, Conn.
- Infoshred, LLC, South Windsor, Conn.
- Hi-Tech Profiles, Pawcatuck, Conn.
- CAS Medical Systems, Inc., Branford, Conn.
- Sanford and Hawley, Inc., Unionville, Conn.



Recognizing the value of Federal OSHA's Alliance Program, CONN-OSHA has developed an alliance program for Connecticut businesses and organizations. Alliances allow organizations committed to workplace safety and health to work with CONN-OSHA to prevent injuries and illnesses in the workplace. Alliance Program participants are groups that may include: employers, labor unions, trade or professional groups, government agencies, and educational institutions.

Alliances must meet short and long term goals that fall into three categories: training and education, outreach and communication, and promoting a national dialogue on workplace safety and health. These Alliances have proven to be valuable tools for both CONN-OSHA and its Alliance participants.

Benefits of participating in an alliance include building trusting, cooperative relationships with CONN-OSHA and Federal OSHA representatives, networking with others committed to workplace safety and health, and leveraging resources to maximize worker safety and health protection.

The current CONN-OSHA Alliances are:

- University of Connecticut Transportation Institute
- Connecticut Highway and Street Supervisors Association

Alliances that include CONN-OSHA and the U.S. Department of Labor Bridgeport and Hartford Area Offices are:

- Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA)
- Prevent Blindness Tri-State
- The Connecticut Tree Protective Association, Inc.

For more extensive information on the SHARP program you can access CONN-OSHA's web site at:

http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/sharp_intro.html

For more information on the Alliance Program you can go to Federal OSHA's web site at:

<http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/alliances/index.html>

CONN-OSHA Outreach Train-the-Trainer Class

Seventeen Connecticut State Department of Education Technical High School teachers completed the #501 Trainer Course in Occupational Safety & Health Standards for General Industry on July 11, 2005. Representing 11 of the 20 Connecticut technical high schools, these teachers are now qualified to conduct 10-and 30-hour general industry training in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Federal OSHA Training Institute. After high school students successfully complete the 10-or 30-hour training, these teachers are now authorized to issue students a General Industry Safety & Health OSHA Outreach course completion card. This 10-hour course is nationally recognized as an entry-level introduction to OSHA Standards, providing the students with valuable safety training that employers recognize.

The first two Train-the-Trainer classes held in 2004 provided by CONN-OSHA to Technical High School teachers were construction-related classes. This was the first General Industry class held so far. To date, 37 teachers have been certified by CONN-OSHA, 13 schools

out of 20 now have qualified teachers. "Our goal is to enable every vocational technical high school graduate to possess either the 10-hour Construction Safety & Health or the 10-hour General Industry Safety & Health OSHA Outreach course completion card," says CONN-OSHA Director Richard Palo.

"The technical high school teachers that volunteered to complete this rigorous 40-hour class and passing a standardized written final exam are to be congratulated on their passion for safety & health, and their commitment to the quality of education for their students," remarked Palo. "It is apparent that the priority of these teachers is to teach their students the importance of safety as a life skill," continued Palo. "As teachers, they are constantly stressing the importance of safety awareness, and they understand the potential impact they may have on their student's future. This training partnership helps to close the gap between classroom theory and the realities of hazards in the workplace."

Fleet Safety-Have You Considered this Issue?

Employers must ensure that operators of vehicles used in the course of their operations are properly licensed, follow safety precautions, and are adequately trained to drive the kind of vehicle used on behalf of the employer, regardless if it is a personal or work vehicle.

At 9 am on October 27, 2005 at the Connecticut Labor Department in Wethersfield, CT, CONN-OSHA is presenting "Part 2" to the previously offered "**Safe Driving - Get There Safely EVERY Time.**" This 3-hour class is entitled "Vehicle Safety Management Program (Fleet Safety)," and was designed to provide training on effective implementation of safety-related policies and procedures related to Fleet safety. After this course, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the role of the safety supervisor in implementing quality fleet safety programs.
- Conduct basic on-site accident investigations and compile accident reports.
- Apply strategies to successfully hire drivers with safe driving habits.
- Implement strategies to improve driver's low-risk habit formation.
- Identify safety-related training needs and deliver effective safety training programs.

Accident control in a motor vehicle fleet is critical. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administra-

tion (NHTSA), the average motor vehicle crash cost to an Employer is \$16,500 (2003). The average cost if there is a fatal injury is \$504,400. Saving lives and minimizing injuries, protecting human and financial resources, and protecting against catastrophic losses are every employers concern.

This class will provide a wealth of information to assist those responsible for company drivers. With winter driving on our door-step, consider this, U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that 70% of workplace injuries during winter storms result from vehicle accidents. Small changes in behavior behind the wheel can decrease the likelihood of getting in a motor vehicle accident. Too often, adult drivers are simply expected to be competent. Consider how you, if you are in a supervisory role, can ensure that safe driving techniques and behaviors are modeled and encouraged within your company.

For more information on Motor Vehicle safety from the OSHA perspective go to www.osha.gov/SLTC/motorvehiclesafety.

If you would consider hosting a presentation of CONN-OSHA's 3-hour "**Safe Driving - Get There Safely EVERY Time**" class, please contact Thomas Hozebin, Program Manager at CONN-OSHA (860) 263-6915.



CONN-OSHA Training Update...

Breakfast Roundtable Discussion Group Third Tuesday of every month The intent of these free 90-minute workshops is to discuss safety and health issues in a supportive and informal environment. These meetings cover subjects ranging from evacuation plans and fire extinguishers to air quality and ergonomics. The roundtable meetings are held from 8:15 am to 9:45 am. Pre-registration is required. The location varies, be sure to call concerning the discussion subject and the location. When you call you can request to be placed on an E-mail distribution list so you will be automatically notified each month as to the location and focus subject.

Vehicle Safety Management Program (Fleet Safety) October 27, 2005 The total cost of a vehicle accident usually exceeds the amount recovered from the insurance company. Accident control in a motor vehicle fleet is critical because increased insurance premiums (among other factors) reduce profits. This impact can be as devastating, if not more, to smaller fleets! A written safety policy, developed, supported, and enforced by management should be part of every employer's overall safety & health management system. Items covered will include: accident prevention, promoting safety activities, personnel training, evaluating driver performance, reviewing incidents/accidents, identifying problem operations or locations, vehicle maintenance programs, and loading/unloading and handling materials.

Powered Industrial Trucks November 8, 2005 With well over one million lift trucks in operation today, emphasis must be placed on both operator and pedestrian safety. This half-day program will help you understand OSHA safety and health regulations governing these pieces of equipment, in addition to providing you with assistance in developing training for your lift truck operators and other affected employees.

OSHA 300 Recordkeeping What Does and Does Not Need to be Recorded December 6, 2005 The purpose of this workshop is to introduce the requirements and procedures related to the OSHA 300 Log. The class will help develop skills to accurately report occupational injuries and illnesses. Resources and reference materials will be provided. The presentation will cover the recording requirements, including a discussion of the employee/employer relationship, which pre-existing cases can be limited in the OSHA forms, and exceptions for some categories of injuries and illnesses. In the Class you will learn:

- What information you need to properly comply with the recordkeeping rules.
- What the recording challenges are for needlestick injuries and tuberculosis.
- How to address privacy protections for injured and ill workers.
- What the electronic options are for completing OSHA forms.

Classes are free and will be held at 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT in Conference Room A from 9 am - 12 noon, unless otherwise noted.

To register for any of these sessions, call John Able at (860) 263-6902 or send an email to able.john@dol.gov.

Pre-registration is required.

Visit www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/osha.htm for more training information.

Fatality & Casualty Reporting

Telephone numbers:

(860) 263-6946 (local)

1-866-241-4060 (toll-free)