



May Is Lyme Awareness Month: Keeping Employees Safe from Tick-Borne Diseases

WETHERSFIELD, May 10, 2019 – May is Lyme Awareness Month and the Connecticut Department of Labor’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health (CONN-OSHA) suggests simple, yet effective tactics that can be used in the workplace as well as in your own backyard.

“Our CONN-OSHA inspectors have found that many employers are looking for assistance in developing comprehensive strategies in place to minimize the dangers of tick-borne disease,” said State Labor Commissioner Kurt Westby. “Especially to protect their employees working outdoors, we encourage workplace training that includes recognizing tick habitat, exposure avoidance, the correct use of repellants, tick checks, blousing or tucking pant legs into socks, wearing light colored work clothing, correct tick removal, and reporting tick bites.”

According to CONN-OSHA Director Ken Tucker, staff is currently meeting with local municipalities to assist in developing plans that will help prevent tick-borne disease transmissions that can take place within the workplace.

“Our goal is to help local municipalities introduce new or updated workplace prevention and controls, simply by using existing standards that address Personal Protective Equipment,” Tucker said. “This inexpensive strategy does not require new regulations or amended legislation, but is geared toward changing the way we think when working outdoors and raising public awareness – when we are at work, and when we are at home.”

Employers interested in learning more about strategies to ensure safer workplaces, including personal protective equipment strategies and consultation worksite inspections, can contact CONN-OSHA at 860-263-6900. Consultation services are offered at no cost to private and public sector employers.

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Under the existing state standards, public sector employers and quasi-public agencies in Connecticut are required to assess their workplaces for the known and recognized hazard of occupational exposure to tick-borne disease, and to implement prescribed workplace control measures. Tucker noted that the state's private sector employers that follow federal OSHA guidelines are also encouraged to implement these initiatives.

"Many of our partners, including the Connecticut Agricultural Experimentation Station, state Department of Public Health, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, University of Connecticut, and local health departments and districts have increased public awareness about preventing tick-borne disease through research findings, bulletins, advisories and recommendations," Westby noted. "However, with higher rates of human infections and the emergence of new tick-borne diseases, the preventative measures offered by our CONN-OSHA staff offer a new look at how we can proactively work as a state to ensure safer work environments and control our exposures to this preventable disease."

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Additional information about tick borne disease prevention:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/ccupationalTickborneDiseasePrevention.htm>

Additional information about CONN-OSHA's free safety consultation program:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/consulti.htm>