



Enjoy the Summer Safely

It's that time of the year when we should be working outside and enjoying the warm weather. Landscapers, gardeners, arborists, and the construction tradesmen are busy, but hopefully we can also enjoy a round of golf, yard work, or other recreational activity. Protecting the skin and eyes against the sun is one of the best things you can do to protect your future health. Solar radiation is strongest between 10:00am and 3:00pm, so it's especially important to protect your skin against the sun during these hours.

Heat cramps, exhaustion, and heat stroke also pose a threat to outdoor workers in the summer season. These maladies are combined under the term "heat illness." According to OSHA, "The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke can result in death and requires immediate medical attention." Check out their online resource entitled "[OSHA's Campaign to Prevent Heat Illness.](#)"

Here are some hints to reduce your risk:

- Limit your time in the sun when possible. If the job requires workers to be exposed to direct sunlight for extended periods, then ensure they take appropriate breaks in shaded areas. Try at least a few minutes in the shade each hour.
- Liberally apply sunscreen on the face, neck, hands, forearms, ears, and any other unprotected skin area. Use a product with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of 15 or more. Put sunscreen on before heading outside, and you may have to apply more during the day.
- Eye damage can also result from prolonged exposure to the sun. Always wear sunglasses that filter out at least 90 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays.
- Wearing a hat will also reduce exposure to the sun and reduce dehydration as the day wears on.
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Monitor employees regularly; look for signs of dehydration or overexposure.

Enjoy the summer weather, but always respect the power of Mother Nature.



SUMMER DRIVING REFRESHER

As the temperatures go up, so do the amount of miles that Americans drive. Getting to and from vacation spots is a rite of summer and even the high price of fuel will not deter families from driving to distant locations. With this increased traveling come increased accident rates and the associated injuries and fatalities.

If you talk with any emergency response professional, most, if not all, will describe incident scenes they have responded to that were easily preventable if basic driving standards had been used.

If you have children riding with you, then safe driving practices need to be of even greater concern. It is estimated that 28% of children aged 14 and under die of "unintentional injuries" in a motor vehicle accident. Even more disturbing is that 55% of these kids were not wearing restraints.

Do the Basics

- Seatbelts for everyone, every time. This preventive action has saved many from serious injury and death, yet it continues to be ignored.
- Do not drink and drive. Approximately 40% of fatal highway-related fatalities involve alcohol. That's a lot of potentially risky driving behind you, next to you and going the other way.
- Don't speed. Speeding increases the risk of an accident due to vehicle handling and driver response time. Let's face it, there's a degree of risk in just getting there. Hurrying is a large reason why some never get there at all.
- Make sure your vehicle is in safe condition. Lights, wipers and proper tire pressure need to be checked before hitting the road.

These basic safety rules, which every licensed driver was initially taught, are good rules of the road for both leisure and work driving. This summer, make a renewed commitment to follow them. Only through increased participation will a decrease in accident rates be realized.



Lyme Disease and Tick-Borne Illnesses

Lyme disease is the most recognized of the tick-borne illnesses. The disease is transmitted by ticks that have fed on certain deer and mice. These ticks are found throughout the United States. The peak tick season is May through September. The areas of highest risk are the Northeast, Great Lakes Region, and an area in Northern California.

Current scientific estimates indicate that the disease is transmitted after the tick has attached to the individual for 6 to 24 hours. Between 15 and 30 percent of ticks are infected. The longer the tick is attached, the greater the probability of infection.

Early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease, 3 to 32 days after the tick bite, include a characteristic "bull's-eye" (red, circular) rash at the site of the tick bite (the most common sites are scalp, groin, and armpits), fever, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, and swollen glands. Later signs and symptoms of Lyme disease, 6 to 9 months after the tick bite, include weak facial muscles, stiff neck, irregular heartbeat, numbness, loss of appetite, dizziness, persistent fatigue, and double vision.

Babesiosis is transmitted by ticks that typically have been infected by rodents, cattle, or wild animals. These ticks are most commonly found in the Northeastern, Pacific Coast, and Upper Midwestern portions of the United States.

The signs and symptoms, which begin 1 to 9 weeks after the tick bite, include fever, chills, profuse sweating, fatigue, dark-colored urine, nausea, abdominal pain, low blood count, and enlarged spleen.

Ehrlichiosis is transmitted by deer ticks and the Lone Star tick. Peak cases are from May to July and October to December. The first known cases were described in 1987. Reported incidences have occurred in individuals over 40 years old. The most prevalent areas of the country are the Southern and Northeastern areas of the United States.

The early signs and symptoms, which occur 5 to 11 days after the tick bite, include rapid onset of fever, acute headache, nonspecific rash (usually lower part of body), shaking chills, generalized fatigue, muscle and joint pain, cough, and vomiting. Individuals can become very sick, with up to 54 percent hospitalized.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is another tick-borne illness transmitted by the American dog tick and the Rocky Mountain wood tick. The states with the highest incidence of the illness are North Carolina and Oklahoma. Fifty percent of the infections occur in the South-Atlantic region of the United States.

The Pacific and West-South Central regions also have cases. More than 90 percent of the patients with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever are infected between April and September.

The early signs and symptoms, which occur 3 to 4 days after the bite, include fever, nausea, severe headache, muscle pain, and lack of appetite. The later signs and symptoms include rash (wrists, forearms, and ankles), abdominal pain, joint pain, and diarrhea.

Train your workers to follow these steps to reduce the likelihood of being bitten by a tick:

- Tuck pant legs into high boots. Tape area where pants and socks meet.
- Wear hats.
- Spray clothing and skin with repellents. Permethrin for the clothes and DEET for the skin.
- Wash clothes in high temperatures after working outdoors.
- Examine skin closely for ticks.
- Check body parts that bend:
 - Back of the knee
 - Between fingers and toes
 - Under the arms
- Check areas where clothing presses against your skin:
 - Area beneath underwear elastic
 - Belt area
 - Neckline
- Check other common areas where ticks hide:
 - Belly button
 - Ears or the area around them
 - Hairline
 - Top of head

Encourage workers to wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be spotted easily.

Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

The proper way to remove a tick and deal with the situation if you find any on your skin.

- If a tick is present, use a fine-point tweezers to grasp the tick at the place of attachment, as close to the skin as possible. Gently apply a firm, steady pressure until the tick releases. Don't jerk, twist, squash, or squeeze the tick. Wait for it to release.
- Clean the wound and tweezers with antiseptic. Burning the tick or using petroleum jelly or nail polish to smother it are not effective methods.
- Watch the site of the bite and your general health for symptoms, which usually take several weeks to develop.
- Place the tick in a closed container and take it to a local health department for identification.

Why It Matters

- Tick-borne diseases range from mild to debilitating.
- As such, they can increase expenses from days away from work and healthcare expenses.
- All of the above can be avoided by taking proper precautions when working outdoors during tick season.