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Workers' Compensation claims which cover medical costs and indemnity payments for an injured or ill worker. And what about the costs to train and compensate replacement workers, repair damaged property, and investigate the accident and implement corrective action?

Companies spend about \$170 billion a year on costs associated with workplace injuries and illnesses and almost \$1 billion every week to injured employees and their medical providers.¹ That's money that businesses can save and pain workers can avoid.

Non-compliance with PPE protocols can be costly.

One key factor that can lead to non-compliance is uncomfortable PPE. In a 2008 survey conducted by KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL* at the National Safety Council (NSC) Congress, discomfort was found to be the chief cause of PPE non-compliance. Other causes included PPE that was too hot, fit poorly or was unattractive-looking.²

Are You Exposed?

Failure to provide workers with the right personal protective equipment (PPE) and making sure that they wear it is a mistake that gambles with employee health and safety and your bottom line.

And, now the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can issue fines for each worker without PPE.³

Federal Regulation Requires Proof

OSHA requires that employers conduct a workplace Hazard Assessment to determine if there are hazards that make PPE use necessary. If hazards are present or likely to be present, then you must do ALL of the following:

- Select and have employees use PPE to protect them from identified hazards identified.⁴
- Inform employees about decisions regarding PPE selection.
- Select PPE that properly fits each employee.
- Provide training in the use and care of PPE.

Hand Safety in the Workplace

- More than 25 percent of workplace accidents involve hand and finger injuries⁵
- Of the workers experiencing these injuries, 70% were not wearing gloves and 30% were wearing the wrong glove for their application.⁶
- The average hand injury claim has now exceeded \$6,000, with each lost-time workers' compensation claim reaching almost \$7,500, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Safety Council. The overall drain on employee productivity becomes apparent, especially when you consider that there are about 110,000 estimated lost-time hand injuries every year.⁷

Protecting Worker Vision

- Statistically, eye injuries are most likely to occur within the workplace.
- Every day, an estimated 1,000 eye injuries occur in American workplaces. The financial cost of these injuries is enormous—more than \$300 million per year in lost production time, medical expenses and Workers' Compensation.⁸
- 90 % of all workplace eye injuries are preventable with the use of proper safety eyewear. Yet, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that workplace eye injuries cost over \$467 million a year. With indirect costs, such as legal fees, judgments and training new workers, the estimated total is more than \$934 million each year.⁹
- The average cost of an eye injury is \$1,463, when you consider all the hidden costs.¹⁰
- More than 2,000 people injure their eyes at work each day. About 1 in 10 injuries require one or more missed workdays to recover from. Of the total amount of work-related injuries, 10-20 % will cause temporary or permanent vision loss.¹¹

Breathing Easier

- Occupational lung disease is the number one work-related illness in the United States.¹² Occupational lung diseases are often not curable, but are always preventable. Improving ventilation, wearing protective equipment, changing work procedures and educating workers are critical to prevention.¹³
- In a 2001 co-sponsored survey,¹⁴ 90% of establishments using respirators had a least one indicator of an inadequate respiratory protection program and more than 45% had at least five.
- An estimated 5 million workers are required to wear respirators in 1.3 million workplaces throughout the United States. Respirators protect workers against insufficient oxygen environments, harmful dusts, fogs, smokes, mists, gases, vapors, and sprays—hazards that can lead to cancer, lung impairment, even death. Compliance with the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard could avert hundreds of deaths and thousands of illnesses annually.¹⁵

Dressed for Safety

- Choose quality apparel that performs properly, fits well and is comfortable. In a tough economy it might be tempting to cut costs by purchasing less expensive protective apparel, but if the PPE rips or breaks, the resulting waste will negate any savings. Similarly, if apparel is uncomfortable and workers don't wear it—resulting in injury or reduced productivity—any potential up-front savings will also go unrealized.¹⁶
- When evaluating the cost of disposable versus re-usable coveralls, keep in mind that re-usables often contain “hidden” costs associated with managing distribution and collection as well as loss of garment functionality due to performance degradation (unraveling edges, thinning of material, etc.). Another caution surfaces when people try to get multiple wearings without laundering the garments. This can create additional contamination issues relating to the continued “collection” of shed skin cells and other debris within and on the garment.
- Sterility in packaging can be another apparel issue and a particular concern in the pharmaceutical industry and cleanroom environments. PPE should be packaged so that users can extract and don the garment without compromising the sterile field. Look for products with four layers of packaging to allow for optimum transition cleanliness.

1 American Society of Safety Engineers, www.asse.org.

2 KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL*, U.S. Workers Taking Chances With Safety By Not Wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), NSC Survey fielded November 17, 2008, http://www.kcprofessional.com/us/mkt/2008nscpressrelease/NSC_08_Survey_FINAL.PDF

3 Safety NewsAlert, OSHA Can Fine Issues for Each Worker Without PPE, Fred Hosier, December 19, 2008 <http://www.safetynewsalert.com/now-osh-can-issue-fines-for-each-worker-without-ppe/>

4 United States Department of Labor (DOL), Under the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) rule, PPE-with few exceptions, must be provided at no cost to the employee, http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=FEDERAL_REGISTER&p_id=20094

5 Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. DOL Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses in cooperation with participating State agencies. Within the manufacturing segment (NAICS 31-33) there were a total of 200,970 head, trunk & upper extremity injuries reported in 2007. Of these, 52,520 were upper extremity injuries (includes hand, finger and wrist) = 26% of the total cases recorded. OS TB 11/8/2007 TABLE R2. Number of nonfatal occupational injuries and illness involving days away from work (1) by industry and selected parts of the body affected by injury or illness, 2006.

6 Workplace HR & Safety, The Perfect Match: Hand Protection and the Hazard. Donna McPherson. <http://www.workplacemagazine.com/surveys/The%20Perfect%20Match%20Hand%20Protection%20and%20the%20Hazard.asp>

7 IBID

8 The Compliance Resource Center, A Safety Worker. March 10, 2009 <http://www.thecrccenter.com/archives/category/bureau-of-labor-statistics/>

9 Prevent Blindness America, Programs and Services. http://preventblindness.org/Ohio/OH_programs.html

10 U.S. DOL Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Cost of Accidents http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/safetyhealth/mod1_costs.html

11 Prevent Blindness America, Workplace Eye Safety. <http://www.preventblindness.org/safety/worksafe.html>

12 American Lung Association, rankings based on frequency, severity, and preventability—with this group of disorders filling all three criteria.

13 American Lung Association, Occupational Lung Disease Fact Sheet. http://www.lungusa.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=dvLUK900E&b=2060319&content_id=%7BA234CDA5-0941-455E-98DF-A5C2CD9CB950%7D¬oc=1

14 CDC – Centers for Disease Control, NIOSH – National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health. Occupational Respiratory Disease Surveillance, Featured Discussion RESPIRATOR USE AND PRACTICES. Study conducted to review respirator use and practices among private sector employees in U.S. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/surveillance/ords/FeaturedDiscussion/ORDS-200508.html>

15 United States DOL Occupational Safety & Health Administration. Safety and Health Topics RESPIRATORY PROTECTION <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection/index.html>

16 ISHN, "If the PPE Fits..." Internal data on file, WRS08-237.