

CIGARETTE SMOKING



SIDE EFFECTS CAN REDUCE PRODUCTIVITY ON WORK SITES

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 46.2 million Americans smoked cigarettes in 2001. This represents 22.8 percent of all adults – nearly one out of four people.

A staggering 440,000 Americans die from using tobacco each year, according to the American Cancer Society. In fact, cigarettes kill more Americans than alcohol, car accidents, suicide, AIDS, homicide and illegal drugs combined.

About 87 percent of lung-cancer deaths are caused by smoking. It is also a major cause of cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus and many other areas. If you are a smoker and have been exposed to asbestos, your risk of getting lung cancer is 100 times higher

Smoking can also lead to a variety of other health problems, including:

- ◆ emphysema
- ◆ heart attack
- ◆ stroke
- ◆ heart disease
- ◆ high blood pressure
- ◆ diabetes
- ◆ gallbladder disease
- ◆ chronic bronchitis
- ◆ osteoarthritis
- ◆ pneumonia
- ◆ periodontal disease


While most Americans understand that cigarette smoking greatly decreases life expectancy, many are not aware of the other detrimental side effects that reduce quality of life. Smoking can also impact your work productivity by reducing your physical mobility and endurance.

Always huffing and puffing on the work site? Smoking causes shortness of breath and narrowing of the arteries, making it much harder to perform the demanding physical work of a Laborer.

Feel like you're always calling in sick? Smokers take 25 percent more sick days each year than non-smokers due to frequent colds and upper respiratory illnesses, which Laborers are already at greater risk for due to frequently working outdoors.

Stomach always upset? Smoking contributes to the development of ulcers and heartburn, a painful condition that reduces appetite and makes physical work more difficult.

QUITTING It is never too late to quit smoking. The health benefits of quitting are immediate – regardless of age. Even those who quit after the age of 50 substantially reduce their risk of dying early. Those who quit by age 35 avoid 90 percent of the health risks.

There are a variety of ways to help kick the habit, including nicotine patches, step-by-step quitting programs, support groups – even hypnotism. Talk to your doctor to find out the best way to help you leave the butts behind. 

MORE ABOUT SMOKING

For more information about the harmful effect of smoking and how to quit, visit the American Cancer Society Online: www.cancer.org or call: **1-800-ACS-2345**.

SCAFFOLDING SAFETY

Practice important safeguards while working on suspended platforms

Working on or around scaffolds can be a dangerous undertaking for Laborers. Although OSHA standards have been in place for scaffolding work since 1971 (and updated in 1996), injuries and deaths continue to occur at an alarming rate.

Each year, scaffold-related accidents account for 9 percent of fall fatalities and 10,000 injuries and illnesses in the construction industry.

Hazards


Some of the most common dangers associated with the work include workers falling from scaffolding and objects dropping onto workers below scaffolding. In a recent study, 72 percent of workers injured in scaffold accidents attributed the accident to either the planking or support failing, the employee slipping or being struck by a falling object.

Fall hazards on scaffolds can also be caused by lack of proper guardrail systems. One study found that only 33 percent of scaffolds had a guardrail.

Avoiding accidents

To help protect workers from scaffold accidents, follow proper guidelines when setting up, tearing down or working on and around scaffolds.

- ◆ Make sure manufacturer's specifications have been observed during the set-up, alteration, moving or dismantling of the scaffold.
- ◆ Use fall-protection measures at heights of 10 feet or more on scaffolds.
- ◆ Be certain that all workers have received training before beginning work on a scaffold – but beware that one type of training will not necessarily apply to all scaffold types.
- ◆ Do not load a scaffold beyond its intended load or rated capacity.
- ◆ Do not use unstable objects such as barrels, loose brick or concrete block to support scaffold or planks.
- ◆ Do not use scaffolds with visible cracks or wooden planks damaged by rot, saw marks – all workers should immediately report any noticeable deficiencies to stewards or supervisors.

Following safe work practices while working on or around scaffolds will help to create a safer work environment for all Laborers. 

New York City local law

A recent revision to the New York City scaffolding law has changed certification completion requirements. The revised code now makes it unlawful for a Laborer to erect, dismantle or modify scaffolding, over 40 feet in height without a supported scaffolding certificate.

CERTIFICATE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS:

- Successful completion of a 32-hour training program
- If a 32-hour course was completed within two years, an eight-hour scaffold safety and training refresher must be completed

CERTIFIED TRAINING IS PROVIDED AT LABORERS TRAINING CENTERS IN NEW YORK



MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES

Avoiding breaks and sprains while stripping forms on concrete projects

For many Laborers, removing forms on a concrete job is a typical worksite activity and therefore does not seem particularly dangerous. However, if proper steps are not taken to ensure safety, musculoskeletal injuries can result to the lower back, hands, knees and feet.

Work surfaces around forms are typically uneven and tight, often requiring Laborers to keep one foot in a trench and the other foot out. When removed, forms are usually lifted and thrown out of trenches and stacked on a truck.

Poor footing and balance while leaning over to pick up and throw heavy objects can lead to a variety of accidents.

Loading forms onto a truck is always more difficult than unloading them. Because forms are typically made of wood, they are often significantly heavier after use from absorbing liquid from curing concrete or ground water in the soil. This added weight places great strain on the lower back and knees.



Simple steps to help reduce the likelihood of injuries while stripping forms:

Avoiding back injuries

- ⇒ **Assess the load you must lift and decide if you can manage it alone, how far it is going and if there are any obstacles in your path.**
- ⇒ **Bend your knees and get as close to the load as possible, keep your back straight and let your legs do the heavy lifting.**
- ⇒ **ALWAYS avoid twisting when you lift, carry or lower the load.**
- ⇒ **Keep the load close to you while carrying it.**
- ⇒ **Work in pairs when lifting or stacking forms – two people working as partners can often get more work done than working alone.**
- ⇒ **Speak with a foreman/superintendent about using a mechanical lift for loading forms at larger jobs where boom trucks are present.**
- ⇒ **Take a few seconds to straighten your back and stretch after heavy lifting.**

Reducing other injuries

- ⇒ **Wear gloves that can aid in gripping and prevent splinters from wooden forms.**
- ⇒ **Wear shoes with soles that provide good traction and balance on awkward walking surfaces to decrease the risk of slips and falls.**
- ⇒ **Assess the work surface and be on the lookout for mud and water that can cause slippery conditions.**
- ⇒ **Remove debris and excess materials in the work area to prevent tripping hazards.**

Tips to make form stripping easier

- ⇒ **Prior to use with concrete, spray forms with form oil to make stripping easier after curing.**
- ⇒ **Use agents available that lessen the amount of force needed to strip forms.**
- ⇒ **When possible, arrange to have the truck located close to the area where the forms will be stripped for easier loading.**
- ⇒ **Be certain that concrete is set before stripping.**



GROUND ZERO HEALTH

PROGRAM TRACKS AILMENTS OF WORKERS AT WORLD TRADE CENTER SITE

Many of the Laborers throughout New York City and the tri-state region who have been involved in the removal of debris from the World Trade Center (WTC) or its ongoing restoration have suffered serious health problems.

To help track these ailments and prescribe appropriate care for them, members who have worked at Ground Zero are strongly encouraged to participate in the World Trade Center Worker & Volunteer Medical Screening and Medical Monitoring Programs.

The overall goal of the program is to address the lack of care available to those involved in the WTC cleanup efforts and improve their health and wellness. Participation is free and confidential and will help officials accurately determine what kinds of health conditions workers have suffered, and more importantly, help secure necessary funding to properly treat them.

The program, which is still accepting new participants, is made possible with the help of the Mount Sinai-Irving J. Selikoff Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, along with the support of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Laborers who think they may qualify for this program are encouraged to call the WTC phone bank at 888.702.0630 to check their eligibility.

