



OUR NEXT OSHA 10-HOUR
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
SAFETY COURSE IS

JANUARY 19 & 20TH

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Working Extended Hours or Unusual Work Shifts

Sometimes you may be required to work a demanding schedule with longer than normal shifts. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines a normal work shift as a period of eight consecutive hours during the day, five days a week with at least an eight-hour rest period. Any shift incorporating longer hours, more consecutive days or evening hours is extended or unusual.

Extended hours and unusual shifts can be stressful on both the mind and body; therefore, it is important to be especially careful. Long, unusual hours could cause you to injure yourself or others and become careless in your work, which negatively impacts your business. Use the following tips to prepare yourself if the nature of your job or emergency situations require you to work extended, unusual shifts. These recommendations will be especially helpful if you know you will be working odd hours beforehand, but they also serve as a quick refresher in emergency situations. (continued. page 3)

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Workers' Compensation Rates in Virginia Going Down

Virginia workers' compensation premiums – the money that employers in Virginia pay to provide workers' comp insurance for their employees – may be going down next year. Why? Virginia has steadily seen a decrease in the amount of money spent on workers' comp claims across the Commonwealth.

What is driving this reduction? Experts believe that the amount spent on workers' comp claims in Virginia is down because of better "claims efficiency". A hearing will be held on October 26 by Virginia's State Corporation Commission to decide the matter.

The only Virginia industry not seeing declines in workers' comp payouts is mining. Virginia has 114 coal mines which employ approximately 4,800 workers. New federal health care regulations include benefits for workers who suffer from black-lung disease, and this will keep costs up.

The prospect of workers' comp premiums going down is obviously good news for business owners, but in a way it is good for workers' too. When premiums are reasonable, businesses are less likely to engage in workers' comp premium fraud by misclassifying workers or failing to provide insurance at all.

In Virginia, most employers are required to carry workers' comp insurance. Liberty Mutual Insurance is the biggest workers' comp insurer in the Commonwealth, followed by American International Group (AIG), Hartford Insurance Group, and Travelers Group.

Source: Dulaney, Lauer & Thomas, LLP <http://www.dulaneylauerthomas.com/news/workers-compensation-insurance-rates-may-go-down-in-virginia20100831.cfm>

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Software that Disables Cell Phone Use While Driving

There are approximately 75 to 80 million people behind the wheel every day, and about 35 percent of those people are texting while driving. Cell phone use is now considered one of the leading causes of auto accidents. While many states have passed laws prohibiting cell phone use while behind the wheel, distracted driving is still on the rise. In order to get our roads a little safer, new software has been created that disables cell phone use once it is detected that the user is driving. ZoomSafer was launched earlier this year, and is currently compatible with Smartphone models. ZoomSafer can be installed on Blackberry, Windows Mobile, and Android use will be coming soon.

ZoomSafer is currently only available for commercial use, but is expected to be available for personal use by the end of the year. The software automatically disables the driver from texting, emailing, or using any other functions that may be considered a distraction. This is something to look forward to as consumers but more importantly for parents with teenage drivers. There is also a version of the software, TeenSafer which is for families that want to put some restrictions on their teen while they are driving. We may never have completely safe roadways, but this software gives us something to at least look forward to, until then, Drive Safely!



OSHA Targets Indifference, Egregious, Violations in Latest Inspection Efforts

In an effort to ensure worker safety by setting examples for all employers, OSHA is aggressively enforcing its standards in cases where employers demonstrate indifference in protecting the health and safety of their workers.

In the past year and a half of the current OSHA administration, OSHA investigators have issued 17 citations for egregious violations. These employers showed multiple instances of willful and flagrant indifference to correcting workplace hazards, many of which resulted in tragic worker fatalities, worksite catastrophes (including explosions and chemical releases) or large numbers of worker injuries or illnesses. This number is more than double the amount of similar violations issued in the two years before the current administration took office. Some of the employers that have been cited as a part of OSHA's recent efforts include BP Products North America, Kleen Energy and Cooperative Plus.

What does this effort mean for employers? More than any other time, it is crucial to make safety and OSHA compliance a top priority. Measures to improve job safety and health will consistently help your bottom line by reducing workers' compensation claims, improving worker satisfaction and employee retention and avoiding costly citations from OSHA.

Making safety and proper recordkeeping a priority can improve your business operations and ensure that OSHA inspections go smoothly.



The Symptoms of Fatigue

Fatigue is a condition brought on by mental, physical or emotional stress. Over time, sleep deprivation will lead to fatigue, which is especially prominent in night workers. Some studies show that it takes more than 10 days to acclimate to night work, so it is important to recognize the obvious signs of fatigue, which are:

- Weariness
- Sleepiness
- Irritability
- Reduced alertness, lack of concentration and memory lapse
- Lack of motivation

More subtle and often longer-term signs of fatigue include:

- Increased susceptibility to illness
- Depression
- Headache
- Giddiness
- Loss of appetite and digestive problems

Know How to Stay Safe and Be Prepared to Fight Fatigue

The most obvious solution to combat fatigue is to sleep longer; however, this is not always possible, especially if you have a hectic home life. Stay safe with these tips and guidelines:

- Take additional break periods and meals during extended shifts to increase productivity and alertness, and lessen the chance for injury.
- Perform tasks that require heavy physical labor or intense concentration at the beginning of the extended or unusual shift.
- During breaks, rest in a quiet, secluded area to recuperate.
- When you go into a shift feeling fatigued, plan for regular, frequent breaks throughout the shift to move about and shift concentration.
- If you must work an extended shift, check with your supervisor to ensure you are not being exposed to dangerous amounts of hazardous chemicals or materials for prolonged periods.

Watch for signs of fatigue in yourself and your co-workers and be ready to take action to combat the effects of an extended or unusual shift and prevent workplace accidents!