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Loss Control

INSIGHTS FOR PETROLEUM MARKETERS

Practicing safety should not stop when an employee heads home from work. According to the National Safety Council, nine out of 10 fatalities and nearly two-thirds of disabling injuries to workers each year occur off the job.

From employee education to wellness programs, organizations of all types and sizes are beginning to understand that even modest efforts to carry over ideals of workplace safety and health to their employees' homes and communities create an opportunity to reduce costs while resulting in a more satisfied workforce.

Read on to learn how some companies are bringing safety home.

Sleep Apnea Is A Growing Concern For Commercial Vehicle Drivers

Sleepiness contributes to a significant number of crashes each year, and sleep apnea has been shown to significantly increase a driver's risk of driving drowsy.

A study sponsored by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the American Trucking Association estimated that nearly one in three commercial truck drivers suffers from mild to severe sleep apnea. Other research indicates that drivers with undiagnosed sleep apnea have an increased risk (two to seven times higher) for falling asleep at the wheel. As a result of these and other studies, a joint task force of health and safety organizations released new recommendations that offer an updated approach to the screening and management of obstructive sleep apnea among commercial motor vehicle operators.

The joint task force suggests a screening process that bases driver certification on severity of sleep apnea. These recommendations suggest certifying a driver at low risk for sleep apnea for a maximum of three months, pending an inservice medical evaluation. Drivers with more severe risk factors or who've been involved in a motor vehicle crash likely related to sleep disturbances should be prohibited from returning to work unless they receive an out-of-service medical evaluation. Furthermore, the task force suggests expanding the screening process to include a more extensive medical and physical exam, flagging such risk factors as body mass index, neck circumference and family history of sleep apnea. For those diagnosed, experts recommend using positive airway pressure for a minimum of four hours within a 24-hour period by a continuous positive airway pressure machine.

Under current FMCSA guidelines, commercial vehicle operators who are being treated for sleep apnea can return to work a minimum of one month after initiation of treatment. The task force's recommendation includes reducing return-to-work time to two weeks after treatment initiation in certain situations. Re-evaluation after four weeks to ensure compliance with therapy and improvement in symptoms also is recommended.

Sleep apnea is a highly treatable disorder. With appropriate therapy and compliance, drivers who suffer from it will be addressing a significant risk for impaired performance on the job.

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR SLEEP APNEA ???

Sleep apnea occurs in all age groups and both sexes, but there are certain factors that put you at higher risk:

- A family history of sleep apnea
- Being overweight
- A large neck size (17 inches or greater for men, 16 inches or greater for women)
- Being age 40 or older
- Having a small upper airway
- Having a recessed chin or small jaw
- Smoking and alcohol use

UPDATE: ETHANOL-BLENDED FUEL PUMPS

Following the completion of a research program to investigate safety concerns associated with dispensing highly concentrated ethanol-blended fuels, Underwriters Laboratories (UL) announced new safety requirements for E85 fuel dispensing equipment.

UL research indicated that although certain materials found in commercially available dispensers can be expected to perform acceptably when exposed to motor vehicle fuels blended with high concentrations of ethanol, some materials experienced significant deterioration during research tests.

The new safety requirements address these material compatibility findings. One element of the research program included a long-term conditioning test, the results of which were used to assist UL in determining the necessary protocols for evaluating potential degradation of dispenser materials from exposure to E85.

UL took the need for E85 dispenser requirements very seriously due to the unique characteristics of ethanol-blended fuels and believe the potential issues identified through this process will help promote the efficient, effective delivery of E85 as safely as possible.

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Six Tips For Surviving A Winter Storm In A Vehicle

Winter weather often poses a dangerous risk to drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, drivers are 36 percent more likely to be involved in a vehicle accident in January than July. Preparing for winter driving and learning defensive driving skills can certainly help avoid on-the-road accidents, but about 25 percent of winter driving injuries result from being trapped in a vehicle during a storm.

Here are six important tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help you stay safe in the event you are caught out in a storm.

1. STAY IN YOUR VEHICLE

Do not leave the vehicle to look for help unless help is visible within 100 yards.

2. DISPLAY A "CALL FOR HELP" SIGN

Raise the vehicle's hood or hang a brightly colored cloth on the antenna to signal for help.

3. KEEP WARM

Turn on the car's engine for about 10 minutes each hour. Do light exercise to keep warm. Wrap your body and head with extra clothes, blankets, newspapers, maps or removable car mats.

4. AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow and slightly open a window for fresh air.

5. STAY AWAKE

If you're alone, stay awake as much as possible. If more than one person is in the vehicle, take turns sleeping.

6. AVOID OVEREXERTION

Since cold weather puts an added strain on the heart, unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling or pushing a vehicle can bring on a heart attack.