Preventing Trench Foot

notice the symptoms of trench foot or any other immersion foot condition. As with any other cold illness, seek medical treatment as soon as possible if you:

- When sleeping or resting, do not wear socks.
- Put on clean, dry socks daily.
- Thoroughly clean and dry your feet.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends:

- The foot may be red, dry, and painful after it becomes warm. Blisters may form, followed by skin and tissue dying and falling off. In severe cases, untreated trench foot can involve the toes, heel, or entire foot.

Symptoms of trench foot include:

- Pain
- Cold and blotchy skin
- Numbness
- Swelling
- A prickly or heavy feeling in the foot.
- A tingling and/or itching sensation

Most medical authorities define trench foot as a medical condition caused by prolonged exposure of the feet to damp, unsanitary, and cold conditions. The use of the word trench in the condition name refers to trench warfare, mainly associated with World War I. It is one of many immersion foot syndromes.

Why Do I Need to Report a “Near Miss”?

Near miss. Close call. Near hit. Close shave. “Almost…” Each of these terms describe an event that could have resulted in an injury, or even a fatality, but didn’t. Social media sites are jam-packed with examples. Every near miss has something in common with an accident or fatality; an existing hazard. That hazard may be in the form of an unsafe condition (an unguarded chain and sprocket) or an unsafe practice (walking in the swing path of a backhoe).

When we experience or cause a near miss – and all of us have – we set into motion two events:

1. A reinforced attitude of invincibility and
2. A baited and set mousetrap waiting for the next victim.

That’s the primary characteristic of a near miss – we walk away unscathed.

While it’s in our nature to share our “narrow escape” with co-workers or friends, nobody wants to fill out an incident form or report it to management. We don’t want to look foolish or have blame placed on us, or even punished, so we tend to look the other way and a hazard that has the potential to be fatal goes uncorrected. Near miss reporting is an important part of a proactive safety culture and should be investigated with the goal of identifying the root cause. In terms of a near miss, hazards can be assessed and prioritized for correction, both in terms of severity (how bad is the potential outcome) and exposure (how likely is an occurrence).

Supervisors, encourage your employees to report near misses and to share safety concerns. Be sure to address those employee concerns and follow up with corrective actions, even if the report was submitted anonymously. Develop a reporting system that does not place blame but promotes a “find and fix” environment. Employees, never miss an opportunity to report a near hit or to remind a co-worker to work safely. You don’t want to leave that baited mousetrap for the next person.