



OREGON™
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

Safety ALERT!

An important safety bulletin from the OAN Safety Committee

November 2008

Winter is Coming! Winter is Coming!

-Ninth in a series

With the cold rainy days of fall and winter, safety becomes an issue on many levels. Cold and flu season can affect the productivity of your workforce.

Hypothermia is a real danger for workers out in the rain and cold. Cold workers are also more prone to musculoskeletal injuries such as back strains. Now is the time to retrain your workers on some basic safety precautions.

Cold and flu season: Now is a good time to reemphasize some basic hygiene practices. Basic prevention includes a reminder to wash hands before eating and after using the toilet. During flu season a trip to the store can mean bringing home flu germs. Washing hands frequently is one of the best protections for everyone.

If workers come to work with a cough or sneezes remind them to cover their mouths or cough into their sleeves. Better yet, advise them if they are very ill that they need to stay home to recover. Remind your management staff that perhaps the business can better withstand one person home sick than a whole office that is sick.

If you have any information about flu shots at a local store or pharmacy, post it in the break rooms in Spanish for your Hispanic crews.

Working in cold weather: Working in the cold can increase the risk of back strains. Performing warm up exercises and stretches becomes extremely important this time of year. Since 34% of injuries are a result of sprains and strains it will pay to make sure your workforce is prepared to go outside and work in the cold. The OAN Safety Committee has developed a poster of warm up stretches. If you do not have this poster or some other similar stretching program, call the OAN to have one sent to you—they are free.

Remember that after a prolonged period of rest, such as lunch, another short warm up period may be required before going back out in the cold.

The proper clothing is also important in preventing cold related problems such as hypothermia. As much as 40% of your body heat can be lost from an uncovered head.

- Dress in layers, so you can adjust what you're wearing to the temperature.
- In cold weather, wear silk, polypropylene or lightweight wool next to you skin.
- In wet weather, wear outer garments that are made with wind and rain resistant fabrics.

- Wear waterproof and skid-resistant footwear. Bring a change of socks in case your feet get wet.
- Do NOT wear loose gloves and scarves, as they may get caught in moving equipment and machinery.

Three basic cold and flu rules: Wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands!

If working on frosty or icy surfaces, take your time. Walk slowly and take small steps to improve traction. Be extra careful on ladders and stairways. Management should be sure that sand is available to put down on slippery walkways.

Watch out for signs of hypothermia: If you suspect a co-worker has hypothermia get them into shelter out of the wind and

wet. If possible remove wet clothes and wrap in dry warm clothing, coats or blankets. Get immediate medical attention.

Hypothermia is a life threatening condition. Signs of hypothermia are:

- Uncontrolled shivering
- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Weakness
- Disorientation
- Unconsciousness

Respectfully,

Jeanette Hubbard, Oisinn Ltd.
Safety Committee Chair

Additional Resources:

- OAN online safety resources: <http://www.oan.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=69>
- Your workers compensation insurance provider and/or broker
- Oregon OSHA: <http://www.orosha.org/> or at (503) 378-3272



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