

July Is UV Safety Awareness Month

July means summer sun for people in most parts of the country. We like to go out and soak up the sunshine at beaches, open-air restaurants, and in nature. But with all that sunshine enjoyment, don't overlook the risks associated with the sun's excessive exposure.

UV Safety Awareness Month raises awareness about the importance of protecting the eyes and skin from the harmful effects of ultraviolet rays. The American Safety and Health Institute says it only takes 15 minutes for the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays to start damaging your skin. (ASHI and Medic 2020)

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention and Safety Specialist

Loss Leaders – Slip, Trip and Fall – Ladder Safety

This month's loss leader theme is falls. Here at NIRMA, we lump all slip, trip and falls together and this group has been one of the top two causes of workers' compensation claims as long as I can remember.

I recently had some hail damaged siding replaced. I noticed a broken piece that the contractor had missed. The extra new siding pieces were stored in the attic above my garage. I was in a hurry, never a good thing when using a ladder, as I had to run home from work and get out a piece for the contractor to use to replace the additional damage I found.

I set the ladder up correctly using the ¼ rule. Up the ladder I go, removed siding, and held it with one hand while sliding that hand down the ladder to maintain three points of contact. In my rush I tried to dismount the ladder on the second to last step. Lost my balance but did not fall. Lucky me, this is a great example of a "near miss." This was a sudden reminder for me that falls can happen any time, so I am sharing some ladder safety recommendations in this month's Safety Short.

The following tips were taken from an OSHA Quick Card on Portable Ladder Safety which can be found here:

https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/portable_ladder_qc.pdf

Portable Ladder Safety

- Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.

Loss Leaders – Slip, Trip and Fall – Ladder Safety - *continued*

- Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing (see diagram).
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support (see diagram). Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
- The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface (see diagram).
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

No one has ever climbed a ladder planning to fall off. Please take the time to set the ladder up properly, use three points of contact, keep your belt buckle between the sides of the ladder and take your time when dismounting. I hope this article will help you keep your own safety in mind when using a portable ladder. I can always be reached at 1.800.642.6671 and chad@nirma.info.

ATTENTION NIRMA CONTACT PERSONS

NIRMA maintains an extensive database containing the names of officeholders, their mailing addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers. This information is used when sending out this monthly Safety Shorts newsletter, our monthly **Interchange** magazine, periodic mailings, or when it is necessary to contact someone directly.

Next time a change occurs in your county or agency, please forward your updated information to Pat Clancy at **pat@nirma.info**.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By K C Pawling, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Weather related obstructions in R.O.W.

It really seems that the last month and a half has been a challenge due to the weather. We have all seen the crop damage, structure damages and vehicle damages because of the storms that have become way too frequent by many people's standards I'm sure. With all the damages that have occurred, the cleanup activities take on a sense of urgency. Homesteads are needing cleaned, and we are also seeing center pivots that have been removed from the fields and relocated to some roadside ditches. With the relocation of center pivots and any tree debris that has been cleared, we need to remember that it can only be temporary situation.

I have been contacted recently about a County's liability should a situation arise involving the structures and debris that are stored in the ditches along the roadsides. This is where things can get complicated, lest I say messy. As it is generally stated, the storing of center pivots and debris should be a temporary situation. With that being said, it can easily start to look like a more permanent situation rather than temporary. When this happens, this is where you as a county need to make sure that you are trying to mitigate your County's potential liability.

I would first begin by making sure that any of the center pivot structures in the road ditches are marked adequately with the appropriate barricades. Secondly, you should within a reasonable amount of time draft a letter and send it to landowners notifying them that the structures should be removed as soon as possible. Make them aware that if a traffic incident occurs involving those structures, that not only can the county be held liable for any damage that occurs, but so can they. As always, you should meet with your County Attorney and discuss how to handle these situations. Allow your County Attorney the opportunity to help you draft a letter for the landowner notification.

Situations like these following natural disaster events are tough to handle. While you are trying to be sympathetic to the landowner's involvement with the event and damages that have occurred, you also need to manage the situation for the County's best interest. Again, we need to make sure that everyone makes it home at night.

Please contact KC at 402-310-4417 or kcpawling@nirma.info if you have any questions.

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