Editor’s note: PASS ON EACH ISSUE OF THIS NEWSLETTER TO EVERYONE WITH SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES AT YOUR COMPANY.

The High Costs of an Unsafe Company

KEY POINTS:
• Many green industry company owners fail to take into account all of the costs of an unsafe operation.
• Among these costs are direct financial costs, such as workers’ compensation claims and increased insurance premiums; human costs, such as poor employee morale; and image costs, such as how an unsafe company appears to customers and to the general public.
• It’s important to understand all of the costs of an unsafe operation in order to determine whether spending a certain amount of money on safety training and other safety initiatives will, in fact, be cost effective.
• One excellent resource for safety tools you can use to help increase your company’s profitability is the PLANET CD entitled Safety Tools for Greater Profitability in the PLANET Bookstore.

Checklist for Employers on the Costs of an Unsafe Company

✓ Understand that an injury results in both direct costs and indirect costs.
✓ Indirect costs (often called hidden costs) can be four or more times greater than the direct costs.
✓ While the direct costs of an employee injury are often covered by a company’s insurance policy, the indirect costs are generally picked up by the employer.
✓ Among the direct costs of an employee injury are compensation to the injured employee, medical treatment and/or hospitalization, lost wages (the difference between the employee’s regular pay and acceptance of a return-to-work/modified-duty position), and rehabilitation costs.
✓ Calculating the indirect costs of an employee injury is much trickier. Among the costs often missed are time spent by management with government investigators, insurance investigators, and attorneys; time spent by administrative staff processing claims and other paperwork; and time spent by the injured worker’s supervisor investigating the incident, taking the person to the doctor, and monitoring the person upon his or her return to a modified-duty position.
✓ The indirect costs of an injury may also include missed customer deadlines (because of slower work by a less experienced employee who is filling in for the injured person) and even the loss of a large customer.
✓ Make sure you document in writing every incident that results in an injury, property damage, and that is a near miss. Then break out all of the costs of each of these incidents.
✓ Know that just one incident, such as a recurring back injury, may cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. Spending a few minutes each week on tailgate training (on such topics as overexertion and proper lifting) will be well worth the cost if it results in fewer back injuries.
✓ Have a system in place for tracking any trends to prevent recurrence of similar injuries in the future.
Reporting Exposures to Potential Bloodborne Pathogens

**KEY POINTS:**

- Whether or not your company is **required** by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to have a formal bloodborne pathogens policy, you should have a written plan to inform your employees about potential exposures.

- Exposure to blood and other potentially infectious body fluids can result in such serious diseases as the hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, or the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

- Employees are often reluctant to report exposures for a variety of reasons. It’s important that you, as their employer, strongly encourage such reporting and that you provide training in the safe handling of blood and other body fluids.

- PLANET members desiring a detailed, written first aid response policy can contact Bill Cook, PLANET’s Human Resources consultant. Contact PLANET at (800) 395-2522 for his contact information. Other good resources for both PLANET and STARS Safe Company Program members are two new National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) brochures, “Protect Your Employees With an Exposure Control Plan” and “Encourage Your Workers to Report Bloodborne Pathogen Exposures.” Both are available by visiting the NIOSH Web page.

**Checklist for Employers on Reporting Exposures to Blood and Other Body Fluids**

- Understand the reasons why many employees are hesitant to report exposures. Among these reasons are that they do not think they will get an infection from the exposure, they think the exposure was their fault, they are embarrassed by the exposure incident, they weren’t using the appropriate personal protective equipment, or they fear they may lose their job.

- Educate your employees on the importance of reporting such exposures. Have a written plan in place that requires reporting and includes information on protecting your employees from potential bloodborne pathogens exposures.

- Make it clear that retaliation for reporting an exposure to blood or other body fluids is strictly prohibited. Ensure that your supervisors understand that as well.

- Identify issues in your operation that discourage exposure reporting. These may include such issues as the culture of your workplace, how much open communication you have with employees on other topics, and/or a lack of confidentiality regarding other sensitive issues.

- Address any barriers you identify, and then train all managers, other supervisors, and nonsupervisory employees on the importance of exposure reporting. Make sure they understand such basics as the importance of wearing clean, disposable latex or vinyl gloves when administering first aid. Include in your training how reporting exposure incidents can help keep your workers healthy and safe, and prevent future exposures.

- Promptly respond to all reports of exposure incidents. Keep written records, and ensure that confidentiality provisions are in place.

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