



SAFETY ALERT #32



June 20, 2008

In the interest of keeping everyone safe CAMSAFETY will be sharing injury information with preliminary root cause analysis. This information is intended to make you think not assess blame. If you have an incident that you would like to share send us the information and we will pass it along.

HAZARDS TO OUTDOOR WORKERS

NIOSH recently created a warehouse of information about safety and health for the outdoor worker which, of course, includes construction workers. We wanted to point this out as the “new” information covers hazards faced every day by construction workers using little or no protection.

All of this information can be obtained by visiting: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor

Physical Hazards: Temperature extremes, noise, lightning/weather, ultraviolet radiation.

Extreme **heat** conditions can cause heat stroke (a life threatening emergency), heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat rash, and other problems. Extreme **cold** conditions can cause hypothermia, frostbite, and other problems. Too much **noise** exposure, a well documented but very often overlooked problem in construction, may cause a temporary change in hearing or a temporary ringing in workers' ears (tinnitus). Repeated exposures to loud noise can lead to permanent, incurable hearing loss or tinnitus. **Lightning** kills about 80 people in the United States each year and injures hundreds. Among construction workers, laborers, machine operators, engineers, roofers, and pipe fitters have been struck by lightning most often on the job. **UV radiation** can cause problems such as sunburn and skin cancer especially in fair skinned workers.

Biological Hazards: Vector-borne diseases (carried by mosquitoes or ticks), bacterium or viruses.

Mosquito-borne diseases include West Nile virus, St. Louis encephalitis, eastern equine encephalitis, western equine encephalitis, and LaCrosse encephalitis. **Tick-borne diseases** include Lyme disease, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, southern tick-associated rash illness, tularemia, tick-borne relapsing fever, anaplasmosis, Colorado tick fever, Powassan encephalitis, and Q fever.

Venomous Wildlife & Insects: Snakes (yes in Michigan), spiders, bees.

These are especially dangerous to workers who have allergies to the animal. **Anaphylactic shock** is the body's severe allergic reaction to a bite or sting and requires immediate emergency care. Thousands of people are stung each year, and as many as 40–50 people in the United States die each year from severe allergic reactions.

Poisonous Plants: poison ivy, oak or sumac.

These plants can cause allergic reactions if the leaves or stalks are damaged and come in contact with workers' skin. These plants can also be dangerous if they are burned and their toxins are inhaled by workers.

Other Hazards:

Workers may be exposed to pesticides or other chemical hazards, traumatic injury hazards, or other safety and health hazards depending on their specific job and tasks. Employers should train outdoor workers about their workplace hazards, including hazard identification and recommendations for preventing and controlling their exposures.