

# Supervisors Safety Bulletin™

The fast-read source of information to help supervisors promote and enforce workplace safety – every day.

September 11, 2008

## Workplace clutter leads to awful accident – trouble for Supervisor

*Conflict between production and safety*

### A REAL-LIFE TALE

**Worker's arm crushed in rush to get the job done**

“What are you doing? You can’t put all those boxes in the middle of the aisle,” John Plough said.

“Well, then you tell me where to put them,” shrugged co-worker Joe Hughes, who was unloading a handtruck full of boxes directly in front of John’s work area.

“I’ll tell you where to put them,” Supervisor Marcy Lowe said as she walked up from behind. “Put them back where you got them until John needs them.”

“But there’s no more room for them out back, either,” Joe said. “When we get busy like this, our area gets pretty clogged up,

just like yours.”

“All right,” Marcy agreed, “just leave them here for now. But don’t bring out any more.”

### Bad scheduling

As Joe walked away, John shut off his machine to chat with Marcy.

“You look like you have your hands full,” Marcy said.

“Yeah, I’m trying to keep both of these machines running today,” John said. “My help didn’t show up.”

*Please see Awful accident ... on page 2.*

### INSIDE

**Be sure to understand noise hazards**

**Roof collapse gets firm in big trouble**

**7 tips for safe hand tool use**

**Safety violator given the axe; was that OK?**

### Sharpen Your Judgment

## Must you tell them to keep container closed?

“How dumb can people be?” Supervisor Harvey Gardner said.

“Aren’t you being a little harsh?” Safety Director Chris Taylor replied.

“Harsh!” Harvey snapped. “John knew better than to carry around a five-gallon bucket of caustic chemicals with no lid on it.

“So guess what happens?” Harvey went on. “He splashes some in his eye. Uhhhh-duhhhh! And now he’s suing and saying it’s my fault?”

“He says we should have made him put a lid on the container and wear eye protection,” Chris explained.

“We used to get that chemical in a powder form, so you didn’t need a lid,” Harvey said. “But now it comes in a liquid and it splashes.”

### Worker lost an eye

“What about eye protection?” Chris asked. “Of course he should have worn some PPE,” Harvey said. “I don’t know why he didn’t.”

The employee lost his vision in one eye. He claimed no one told him to put a lid on the container or use PPE when handling the chemical.

Was the firm able to get the case dismissed?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

*Make your decision, then please turn to page 4 for the court’s ruling.*

# Fines, accidents and damage supervisors could've prevented

*News you can use to head off safety mishaps*

*In this regular section we highlight situations that led to fatalities, injuries, near-misses, damaged equipment or fines that frontline supervisors could've prevented.*

## **Metal makers in OSHA's sights: This one fined big**

Since announcing its intention to focus on safety in the primary metal industry, OSHA inspectors have visited countless firms. And in most instances, the agency has turned up safety violations.

**What happened:** Inspectors visited Cast Metals, Inc., an iron foundry and metal fabricating facility in Dreshler, OH.

**What people did:** The safety cops did a top-to-bottom inspection.

**Result:** The firm was fined \$114,000 for poor lockout/tagout training, lack of personal protective equipment, including face and eye protection for workers handling molten metal, electrical hazards, over-exposure to lead, high noise levels and lack of respiratory protection.

**Lesson:** The more hazardous an occupation – or a specific task – the more important it is for supervisors to assure that proper safety precautions are followed.

## **Didn't take precautions even after roof collapsed**

A changing work environment requires that supervisors take a lead role in assessing that safety is not being compromised.

**What happened:** Heavy snow and ice caused a roof to collapse at DeCoster Egg Farms, Turner, ME.

**What people did:** Unfortunately, supervisors sent workers onto the

broken roof to remove snow. People were also sent into the building to retrieve eggs without anyone having evaluated the building's structural integrity.

**Result:** The workers were put at risk of being struck by falling sections of the roof. The firm was fined \$150,000 for failing to do the evaluation, and related safety shortcomings.

**Lesson:** Emergency situations are dangerous enough without increasing the risk by taking rash and unsafe actions.

## **OSHA sorts through dirty laundry; fine hits \$149K**

There are enough things that can go wrong on a job that you don't expect. That's why it's important for supervisors to make certain that all known hazards are flagged and/or eliminated.

**What happened:** It was business as usual at Texas Linen Co., an industrial laundry in Austin, TX, that specializes in cleaning healthcare linens.

**What people did:** OSHA inspectors went through the facility with a fine-toothed comb.

**Result:** It didn't go well for the firm. The company was fined \$149,000 for an array of violations including not giving Hep-B vaccines to workers who handled contaminated linens; electrical hazards; poor machine guarding; and failing to provide sanitary working conditions.

**Lesson:** Once people catch Hep-B it's too late! Be sure vaccinations are available beforehand to those who need them.

## SAFETY TRAINING TIPS

### ■ 7 tips for choosing ergonomic hand tools

Lots of hand tools these days are advertised as being "ergonomic."

So what's that really mean?

In short, it's a hand tool with a design that improves efficiency while reducing discomfort, fatigue and the risk of injury.

That's a large order. Here are some "ergonomic" tips to consider, courtesy of [CableOrganizer.com](http://CableOrganizer.com):

1. Avoid tools with built-in finger grooves because workers' finger sizes differ greatly.
2. A cushioned handle is better than a hard plastic, steel or wooden one. Convert hard handles with a slip-on, cushioned sleeve.
3. For double-handled or scissor-like gripping and cutting tools, choose ones with spring-loaded handles that return to the open position.
4. For tasks that require precision and delicacy, opt for tools with 1/4- to 1/2-inch grip diameters.
5. For tasks that require heavy force, use tools with 1 1/4- to 2-inch grip diameters for a firmer grasp.
6. Always try to match tool length to the space constraints. Excessively long or short tools can force workers into awkward positions.
7. When an object needs to be gripped for an extended period of time, use clamping or vice pliers.

### ■ Training younger workers

Use all your regular training techniques with younger workers, and remember these three tips, too:

- **Learn what they know.** Young people might pretend they know something they don't to avoid embarrassment.
- **Make it crystal-clear.** Explain exactly what you want them to get out of the training.
- **Keep checking in.** Monitor young people the closest, to be sure they really get what you're teaching them.