

June 1, 2020

WHAT'S INSIDE

2 Sharpen Your Judgment

Was verbal warning enough discipline?

3 What's Coming

Court decision re-opens the definition of repeat violation

4 Who Got Fined – And Why

Worker dies from inhaling lacquer thinner: \$183K

5 COVID-19 Extra

Coronavirus prompts companies to develop new protective tech

6 Safety Regs Update

OSHA's coronavirus-related whistleblower policy gets audited

8 What Would You Do?

Coronavirus pandemic discussions are taking over safety training

SAFETY NEWS ALERT

Safety News Alert, part of the Catalyst Media Network, keeps safety pros up to date on the latest OSHA news, safety training ideas, workers' comp cases and injury cases from other companies. Read what more than 334,000 safety pros turn to regularly for occupational safety information. Safety News Alert's editorial staff is lead by veteran Editor-in-Chief Fred Hosier.

5 slip-ups that turned workplaces into coronavirus hot spots

■ Steps to prevent COVID-19 spread among workers

On April 15, 2020, the Smithfield Foods Sioux Falls, South Dakota, plant became the No. 1 coronavirus hot spot in the U.S. with 761 positive tests.

Not the city of Sioux Falls. Not the state of South Dakota. The plant, all by itself.

Put another way: On that date, a workplace became the No. 1 source of virus cases in the country.

How'd it happen? What happened at other plants that had similar fates?

Safety not initially addressed

Investigations by federal agencies, such as the CDC, and local health

officials, and reporting by media such as *Forbes* and *The Washington Post* lays out what happened.

Here are the factors that led to these workplaces becoming coronavirus hot spots that claimed at least 50 lives:

- **Lack of social distancing.** The Sioux Falls plant is older, with employees working two feet from each other without plastic guards in between.
- **Lack of masks.** At several plants, health officials observed employees without face masks, or wearing insufficient ones.
- **Work-while-sick culture.** A local health official called out

(Please see Hot spots ... on Page 2)

RETURNING WORKERS

Coalition releases re-opening framework

A coalition of safety groups, businesses and government agencies, led by the National Safety Council, has released a framework for employers during re-opening in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The recommendations are from the SAFER (Safe Actions for Employee Returns) task force.

The six framework focus areas are:

- **Physical environments:** building maintenance, requiring physical distance among employees
- **Medical issues:** employee health monitoring, encouraging good hygiene and infection control
- **Stress, emotional and mental health:** methods to allay the anxieties workers may feel about their jobs when returning to work
- **Employment and human resources:** addressing the questions workers

have about how the nature of their work may have changed in the last few months

- **Communication needs:** effective, timely and frequent communication about arriving back at work, and personnel and policy changes, and
- **External considerations:** how changes outside of an employer's control need to be considered.

The NSC urges the U.S.

Department of Labor to adopt the SAFER framework as part of its Opening America's Workplaces Again national online dialogue.

SAFER launched with 48 member organizations and has added 18 more.

The group says it will focus on developing "playbooks" – instructions for how employers can come back into operations safely.

Info: tinyurl.com/frame596

FEDERAL GUIDANCE

Cleaning workplaces after coronavirus

Employers are getting guidance on how to properly clean and disinfect their facilities before re-opening from coronavirus-related closures.

The EPA and the Centers for Disease Control issued guidance providing step-by-step instruction for post-pandemic cleaning and disinfecting of workplaces, public spaces, businesses, schools and homes.

The guidance includes a cleaning and disinfecting decision tool.

2-step process

To properly disinfect surfaces to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure, a two-step process should be followed:

1. Use soap and water to remove germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces, which lowers the risk of spreading infection.
2. Use disinfectants to kill germs still living on surfaces to further lower the risk of spreading infection.

The EPA has a list of disinfectant products – including ready-to-use

sprays, concentrates and wipes – that are effective against the coronavirus.

The agency reminds users to follow product label instructions and safety information closely, including:

- leaving product on surfaces long enough to kill germs, and
- rinsing the product off to avoid ingesting it.

Info: tinyurl.com/cleaning596

Hot spots ...

(continued from Page 1)

the Greeley, CO, JBS USA beef processing plant after employees said they were encouraged to come to work sick.

- **Incentives sent wrong message.** The JBS plant posted on its Facebook page that all employees who came to work on a particular day would receive five pounds of ground beef as they left work. Translated: Go to work, sick or not, get free food.
- **Language barrier.** At the Smithfield plant in South Dakota, workers were given packets about COVID-19 and safety – in English only. The CDC found 40 languages spoken at the plant. Reminder: OSHA requires safety training to be provided in languages employees understand.

Commonly known solutions

In each of the workplace hot spot cases, companies took steps to protect employees after the virus had already spread widely among their workforces.

The solutions won't be a surprise to anyone who has followed the situation:

- masks
- social distancing (at least six feet)
- proper training about COVID-19 for employees, and
- plastic "sneeze guards" to protect employees who aren't six feet apart.

Last but not least: This is where good safety cultures come into play. It's simple. Safety first. No employee should feel they have to choose between risking their life and keeping their job.

Info: Access this story on our website for more information.

SHARPEN YOUR JUDGMENT

This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

■ WAS VERBAL WARNING ENOUGH DISCIPLINE?

"Safety Manager Pete Travers!" Attorney John Jenkins shouted.

Pete was staring out the window until John's shouting brought him out of his reverie.

"Sorry John, I must have been daydreaming," Pete said. "It was really surreal ... we were all confined to our homes for some reason."

"Strange ... but I have something serious to discuss," John said.

'They knew better'

"We've been fined by OSHA," John continued. "Something about a supervisor who was injured in a fall."

"Terence Connor fell while he and another employee were working at a little above 6 feet in height," Pete said. "They were supposed to be using a scaffold and fall protection.

"Instead, they decided to balance themselves on some boards they placed between the stairwell walls and hand railings," Pete continued.

"You disciplined them?" John asked.

"They definitely knew better, so yes," Pete replied. "Well, as per policy, I gave the employee a verbal since it was his first offense. I'll give Terence a talking to as well once he's back on full duty."

"You said 'they knew better.' Does that mean they were trained to do it more safely?" John asked.

"If you're asking about unpreventable employee misconduct, I'd say it definitely was," Pete said.

Pete's company fought the citation. Did it win?

■ Make your decision, then please turn to Page 6 for the ruling.

SAFETY COMPLIANCE *Alert*

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: FRED HOSIER
FHOSIER@PBP.COM

EDITOR: MERRIELL MOYER
MANAGING EDITOR: RICH HENSON
PRODUCTION EDITOR: PATTI JACOBY
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: CURT BROWN

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OSHA VIOLATIONS

Decision re-opens definition of 'repeat'

■ PREVIOUS RULING ON SEVERITY OF VIOLATION THROWN OUT BY COURT

An OSHA appeal of a 2018 decision making repeat citations tougher for the agency to prove has been rejected as moot by a federal appeals court, giving the agency at least a partial victory.

The appeals court remanded the case to the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, suggesting it should also vacate it as moot since the company filed for bankruptcy and can no longer pay the fine.

Company filed for bankruptcy

OSHA appealed the OSHRC's decision on a citation and fine of \$7,000 against Angelica Textile Services, a commercial laundry, which saw the commission downgrade the agency's repeat violations to serious status.

During the proceedings, Angelica filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, so it can't pay the fine and hasn't appeared in court during the appeal process, which renders the case moot and effectively wipes out the decision, according to the appeals court.

OSHA also failed to collect the fine

from the bankrupt estate earlier. Now there is no way to collect it.

Narrower focus for 'repeat'

The original 2018 decision refined what the OSHRC considered a repeat citation with the commission stating Angelica "actively sought to eliminate similar hazards" after receiving the prior citations.

Angelica was cited in 2005 for completely failing to comply with confined space and lockout/tagout rules, but the repeat citations issued in 2008 – which led to the 2018 decision – showed just small problems under the same regs.

So because the company took measures to abate the hazards after the original citations, the commission said there was no basis for OSHA to issue the repeat citations, so it downgraded them to "serious."

Now that the case is considered moot, OSHA gets a reprieve on what can be considered a repeat violation.

However, a similar case could be brought at any time. With new faces on the commission since 2018, it's hard to say how it would rule now.

Info: tinyurl.com/angelica596

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Hospital ups safety after nurses' lawsuit dismissed

A lawsuit brought against a New York City hospital for allegedly failing to keep its nurses safe during the coronavirus pandemic was dismissed by a federal judge.

The judge found in favor of the Montefiore Medical Center, dismissing the lawsuit brought against it by the New York State Nurses Association, but the union is still calling this a win since the hospital moved toward better safety after the lawsuit was filed.

Accusations against the hospital included failing to provide enough PPE and a lack of measures to prevent further spread of the coronavirus.

In his decision, the judge said he "did not have the authority to rule on the disagreement."

This was because he found the hospital and union were in a better position than the court to find a way to achieve their goals.

The judge said he assumed both sides shared the "ultimate goal of maximizing protections for healthcare workers on the front lines."

Win-win situation?

Since the lawsuit was filed, the hospital has already made changes, handing out N95 masks to nurses daily, restoring their sick pay, expanding testing to nurses with coronavirus patients and giving them additional compensation benefits, according to an NYSNA statement.

Info: tinyurl.com/nurses596

TRENDS TO WATCH

Watch what's happening in various states. Some actions indicate trends.

■ WORKER FIRED FOR USING WEED CAN PURSUE LAWSUIT

A New York court refused to dismiss a case for an employer that terminated an employee who tested positive for marijuana, but who had obtained medical marijuana certification prior to being fired.

Kathleen Gordon was ordered by her employer, Consolidated Edison, to take a random drug test Dec. 21, 2016 and was fired Jan. 11, 2017 for a positive result, according to a blog post by law firm Jackson Lewis.

After she took the drug test, but before the termination, Gordon became a certified medical marijuana patient to treat inflammatory bowel disease, so she filed a disability discrimination claim.

Consolidated Edison argued Gordon took the drug test before becoming a patient, and she admitted smoking marijuana on the day she took the drug test, days before getting her medical marijuana card.

The court wouldn't dismiss the case because there were issues of fact as to why Gordon was fired, specifically the fact the company knew about Gordon's disability prior to its decision to fire her.

■ POSITIVE DRUG TEST NOT ENOUGH TO DENY COMP

A Kentucky employer couldn't use an injured worker's cocaine use to prevent it from having to pay workers' comp.

Bernabe Aguirre tested positive for cocaine after falling from a ladder.

In court, R&T Acoustics said Aguirre's voluntary intoxication caused the incident, and an administrative law judge agreed.

However, in an unpublished decision, the state supreme court said the positive test alone was not enough to prove drug use was the sole cause of the incident.

Roundup of most recent OSHA citations

Worker dies from inhaling lacquer thinner: \$183K fine

OSHA cited a contractor after a worker died from inhaling lacquer thinner he used to resurface a bathtub. Inspectors said the company failed to evaluate the chemical wash cleaning task to determine the level of exposure to lacquer thinner.

Fine: \$183,127

Company: Creative Multicare Inc., Jonesboro, GA

Business: Building contractor

Reasons for fine:

One willful violation for failure to:

- identify and evaluate respiratory hazards in workplace

14 serious violations, including failure to:

- construct room used for mixing chemicals to proper fire-resistive rating
- use gravity or mechanical exhaust ventilation system in storage rooms
- use powered industrial trucks rated for use in atmospheres where ignitable or explosive mixtures were present
- provide employees with flame retardant clothing
- assess workplace for hazards requiring PPE
- ensure workers used protective eye equipment
- require employees use appropriate hand protection while using chemicals
- ensure employees' facial hair didn't prevent proper seals with tight-fitting facepiece respirators
- provide eye- or body-washing stations where corrosives were present
- protect employees from airborne concentrations of Toluene above permissible exposure limits

The company was also cited for one other-than serious violation.

Employees exposed to fall, forklift hazards: \$216K

A manufacturer was cited for exposing employees to fall, forklift and a variety of other hazards.

Fine: \$216,299

Company: Mods International Inc., Appleton, WI

Business: Prefabricated metal building and component manufacturing

Reasons for fine:

Seven repeat violations for failure to:

- certify workplace hazard assessment was performed
- develop and implement written hazard communication program
- provide effective training on hazardous chemicals in work areas
- check fire extinguishers annually
- train forklift operators
- properly store oxygen cylinders
- install and use equipment according to instructions on labels

14 serious violations, including failure to:

- administer effective hearing program
- establish and implement written respiratory protection program
- provide medical evaluation to test employee ability to use respirator
- provide training about fall hazards
- ensure flexible cords weren't used as fixed wiring

Hand caught in machine: 7 violations, \$77K fine

OSHA cited a New Jersey food manufacturer after a worker's hand got caught in a rolling machine. The worker suffered severe cuts and bruises.

Fine: \$77,184

Company: D.O. Productions, Lodi, NJ

Business: Frozen specialty food

Reasons for fine:

One repeat violation for failure to:

- provide machine guarding for equipment ingoing nip points

Six serious violations for failure to:

- ensure ladders were used only for purpose designed for
- outline procedures for control of hazardous energy
- perform periodic inspections of energy control procedures
- provide training on energy control program
- affix lockout/tagout devices to equipment being cleaned
- prevent flexible cords from being used as fixed wiring

WORKERS' COMP DECISIONS

Repetitive stress injury wasn't reported: Benefits?

A worker injured his shoulder due to repetitive stress, but didn't report it right away. Can he collect?

What happened: He began feeling pain in his right shoulder caused by repetitive stress over a ten-year period until his right rotator cuff "locked up," preventing use of his right arm. He didn't report the problem or seek medical help until the injury occurred.

Company's reaction: The condition wasn't reported until the incident happened, so it can't be classified as a repetitive stress injury.

Decision: Yes, he could collect. With repetitive trauma, an identifiable point in time is established when the employee stops working and seeks medical help, according to the court.

Cite: *Martinez v. International Paper Co.*, NE Court of Appeals, No. A-19-409, 1/7/20.

Worker refuses medical exam: Can he collect?

A worker refused an independent medical exam after pain from his injury flared up a few years later. Can he collect benefits?

What happened: The worker injured his shoulder, requiring surgery. Two years later, the injury began bothering him again, but his doctor said he'd need renewed authorization from the company before treatment could begin.

Company's reaction: You gave up your right to comp when you refused to take the exam.

Decision: He could collect. The original authorization was never rescinded, so an independent exam wasn't required.

Cite: *Harris Steel Group Inc. v. Botkin*, IA Court of Appeals, No. 19-0015, 1/9/20.

MITIGATE EXPOSURE

Coronavirus prompts companies to develop new protective tech

From vibrating wristbands and smart phone apps for social distancing to devices that warn users when they're about to touch their face, companies are coming up with ways to mitigate exposure to the coronavirus.

Big companies like Ford as well as smaller software and tech companies are developing new technology to keep workers and the public safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ford's wristbands

Ford Motor Company has been testing electronic social-distancing wristbands to help lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 inside its factories while they retool and manufacture PPE and medical equipment.

These wristbands are like watches, but they're designed to vibrate anytime workers come within 6 feet of each other to help enforce mandated social distancing, according to a Fox Business story.

Because the coronavirus is mainly spread through droplets from the mouth and nose that can travel distances of 3 to 6 feet, Ford and other companies are working on ways to keep workers at least 6 feet apart while they perform their job duties to help reduce the risk of transmission.

Hygienehook and other gadgets

Some companies have come up with other unique ways to help prevent the spread of the disease, such as DDB Ltd., a company that makes office furniture, which recently designed the "hygienehook," a pocket-size gadget which lets you open a car door without touching it, which was featured in a recent Reuters story.

Others, such as 3D printing company CAD Crowd, opened themselves up for suggestions from the public via a gadget design contest.

They've received about 65 entries, including ideas for a wrist-mounted disinfectant sprayer, half gloves for pushing buttons with your knuckles instead of your fingers and a device for

cab users to open car doors without touching the handles.

AI analytics for fever detection

Another tech firm, Scylla, a U.S.-based AI company, designed analytics software to measure the temperature of a person's forehead and send out an alert if a fever is detected.

The software requires taking and analyzing images from a thermal camera and could be used in places like airports and hospitals.

App for social distancing

New York-based FROM has designed a social-distancing app for use with smart phones that functions similarly to Ford's wristbands.

Their Social Safety App began beta testing in April. Users install the app then wear their smart phone on an armband while they work.

If workers come within 6 feet of one another, the app alerts them through beeps, vibrations and light displays, and the closer they get the sounds and lights become more urgent.

Social Safety App also keeps a private record of accidental close contact, so in case of infection, employers can warn employees of potential exposure to the coronavirus.

For more information, access this story on our website.

Judge throws out worker's coronavirus lawsuit

A lawsuit brought by an employee and a community advocacy group against Smithfield Foods for alleged shortcomings in reducing worker exposure to the coronavirus was dismissed by a federal judge.

The judge found Smithfield's Milan, MO, pork plant had taken significant steps to reduce a COVID-19 outbreak.

Efforts to reduce transmission

Those steps involved enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the facility, promotion of social distancing

guidelines, processing fewer hogs and increasing pay for employees who are working fewer hours.

Between the company's efforts to reduce transmission of the disease and the fact there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the plant, the court couldn't conclude an outbreak was inevitable.

For those reasons the judge dismissed the case, which was filed by a worker known as "Jane Doe" and the Rural Community Workers Alliance, according to an AgriPulse.com story.

Deferred to OSHA and CDC

The court deferred to Department of Agriculture and OSHA jurisdiction over the matter to "ensure uniform national enforcement" of guidance issued for the meat and poultry industry by OSHA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A ruling on whether the plant was complying with the OSHA/CDC guidance would only be "binding on Smithfield, but not other meat-processing facilities because the court lacks personal jurisdiction over them."

That could potentially lead to inconsistent regulations in the industry, and because of the rapidly evolving guidelines emerging due to the coronavirus pandemic "maintaining a uniform source for guidance and enforcement is crucial," the judge stated.

Actual, imminent harm?

While the judge said he understood workers' worries over the coronavirus threat in the meat and poultry processing industry, his analysis had to determine whether there was actual, imminent harm if the injunction didn't go through.

He made certain to point out this was "not the same as analyzing whether employees risk exposure if they continue to work, and unfortunately, no one can guarantee health for essential workers – or even the general public – in the middle of this global pandemic."

Info: tinyurl.com/SFlawsuit596

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

OSHA's coronavirus-related whistleblower process to be audited

The Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General announced it will be auditing OSHA's coronavirus whistleblower complaint process.

A May 6 letter to the agency states the audit will focus on actions taken to address COVID-19-related complaints and their overall impact on OSHA operations.

Anti-retaliation measures

OSHA issued a reminder April 8 telling employers they can't retaliate against workers who report unsafe conditions during the pandemic.

"Employees have the right to safe and healthy workplaces," the reminder stated, and any worker who believes their "employer is retaliating against them for reporting unsafe working conditions should contact OSHA immediately."

Retaliation includes termination, demotion, denial of overtime and promotions or reduction in pay or hours.

By mid-April, the agency received more than 3,000 complaints from workers in essential industries operating during the pandemic, reporting PPE shortages, poor efforts in maintaining social distancing and workers forced to work with

employees who were visibly ill.

Many complaints came from healthcare workers who were issued plastic ponchos and masks made from paper towels as PPE because of a shortage of proper safety equipment.

Info: tinyurl.com/oigaudit596

Court: Previous record no excuse in fatality case

A company's excuse that it never had an incident before was not a good enough defense against an OSHA citation for a workplace fatality, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The OSHRC said the company's 50-year, fatality-free history didn't mean the hazard didn't exist.

Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) trained marine mammals to detect trespassing swimmers around U.S. Navy installations.

On April 28, 2014, three SAIC employees were training a sea lion in San Diego Bay.

Two employees handled the animal while on a boat while the third worker would attempt to avoid detection by the sea lion.

The swimmer was wearing a wetsuit and a weighted belt and was expected to hold his breath and dive underwater while avoiding the animal.

Because it was around 9 p.m., visibility for the swimmer was greatly reduced, and flashlights were only used in emergencies.

Drowned during delay

On one run the animal became distracted by a wild sea lion and failed to locate the employee underwater.

The swimmer was found unresponsive by the SAIC team.

The swimmer was later pronounced dead at a nearby hospital, with the cause of death listed as drowning.

General Duty Clause citation

OSHA investigated the incident and cited SAIC under the General Duty Clause for failing to protect its employees from "drowning hazards while swimming during marine mammal training operations."

An administrative law judge upheld OSHA's citation and \$5,000 fine.

SAIC appealed, arguing that its employees weren't at risk of drowning, citing its 50-year history. However, the OSHRC didn't accept the argument.

Info: tinyurl.com/SAIC596

SHARPEN YOUR JUDGMENT – THE DECISION

(see case on Page 2)

No, Pete's company lost. The court found the company didn't document disciplinary action, so there was no evidence it disciplined its employees for safety violations.

The company claimed it did discipline its employees for safety issues, but those disciplinary actions involved a verbal warning only for a first offense. Since the verbal warning was usually enough, it didn't have evidence of further disciplinary action.

OSHA argued that since the company didn't have any proof it disciplined its employees for safety-related infractions – including the supervisor and employee involved in this case – there was insufficient proof of unpreventable employee misconduct.

Because of the lack of evidence, the court agreed with OSHA and upheld the citation.

■ ANALYSIS: ENFORCEMENT OF SAFETY RULES

Safety rules need to be properly enforced, and that involves documentation, even on the first offense.

In this case, the company claimed it didn't have any safety problems and cited its lack of documented employee violations as proof.

But the court saw the lack of documentation as a total failure to enforce safety rules that could have prevented an employee from becoming injured.

Cite: *Secretary of Labor v. Cooper T. Smith Corporation, doing business as Blakely Boatworks Inc.*, Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, No. 16-1533, 4/1/20. Dramatized for effect.

Government notices on workplace safety

Here's SCA's digest of key notices that appeared recently in the Federal Register (FR) or on OSHA's website concerning workplace safety issues.

OWNER SENTENCED

The owner of a New Jersey construction company pleaded guilty to one count of felony perjury for lying to OSHA inspectors during an investigation into two separate incidents involving workers falling through skylights.

After pleading guilty, Robert Riley, owner of RSR Home Construction, was sentenced to two years of probation and fined \$5,500 for lying under oath during a May 2018 OSHA investigation.

OSHA began investigating Riley and his business after two of his employees – in two separate incidents – suffered serious injuries after falling through an unguarded skylight while repairing a roof.

RSR Home Construction agreed to a \$50,000 penalty for one willful and three serious violations for lack of fall protection and other safety issues while in proceedings before the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

During the OSHA investigation, Riley testified he didn't authorize his employees to work on roofs, but text messages to the injured workers revealed he directed them to begin repairs on the roof where the incidents took place.

FOOD SERVICE SAFETY

OSHA issued a new alert for keeping restaurant and food and beverage business employees providing curbside pickup and takeout services safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

This alert provides safety tips for restaurant and food and beverage businesses to protect their workers from COVID-19 exposure while providing curbside pickup and takeout services.

Safety measures OSHA recommends for these businesses include:

- reserving parking spaces near the

- front door for curbside pickup only
 - avoiding direct hand-offs if possible
 - displaying door or sidewalk signs with services available, instructions for pickup and hours of operation
 - practicing sensible social distancing by maintaining 6 feet between co-workers and customers
 - allowing workers to wear masks over their nose and mouth to prevent them spreading the virus
 - encouraging workers to stay home if they're sick
 - providing alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol along with a place to wash hands, and
 - encouraging workers to report any safety and health concerns.
- The alert is available in English and Spanish.

Info: tinyurl.com/foodone596 and tinyurl.com/foodtwo596

CORONAVIRUS TESTING

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission says an employer can administer a coronavirus test before permitting employees to return to the workplace.

The confirmation comes via the EEOC's FAQ about coronavirus page:

Q: May an employer administer a COVID-19 test before permitting employees to enter the workplace?

A: The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requires that any mandatory medical test of employees be "job related and consistent with business necessity." Applying this standard to the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers may take steps to determine if employees entering the workplace have COVID-19 because an individual with the virus will pose a direct threat to the health of others. Therefore an employer may choose to administer COVID-19 testing to employees before they enter the workplace to determine if they have the virus.

Info: tinyurl.com/testingada596

WHERE TO GET HELP

NEED INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC INFO ON RE-OPENING?

The American Industrial Hygienist Association has released Industry-specific guidelines for safe re-entry of the workplace following coronavirus-related shutdowns.

The AIHA initially posted resources for the retail, restaurant, hair and nail salon, and construction industries to safely get back to work following the coronavirus pandemic.

Guidance for other industries will be added, including gyms, home services such as plumbers and pest control and office environments.

Guidelines include recommendations on:

- ventilation
- personal hygiene
- physical distancing, and
- enhanced cleaning.

Info: backtoworksafely.org

What safety pros say

What are your strategies for bringing employees back to work onsite?

92%

Enhance cleaning/disinfection

76%

Provide flex-work arrangements

56%

Provide masks to workers

54%

Reduce number of onsite workers

Source: Mercer Human Resource Consulting, 400 responses

Forty-three percent of survey respondents said they will continue virtual work where possible.

Info: tinyurl.com/minrisk596 for more on return-to-work.

Each issue of SCA contains an exclusive survey to give safety professionals insight into what their peers nationwide are thinking and doing.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Here's a challenging scenario you could encounter. We've asked three of your peers what they'd do. How would you handle it?

Coronavirus pandemic discussions are taking over Mike's safety training

The Scenario

Manager Mike Kelly stood at the front of the conference room as a group of workers filed in for safety training.

Thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, this was a much smaller group than Mike was used to.

The room was also set up differently, allowing for the required 6 feet of social distance.

Everyone was already wearing PPE too, in the form of face masks, which further set things apart from what had been the norm.

They want time to talk

"OK guys, we don't have a lot of time, so let's get started," Mike began.

But he could see no one was paying attention to him.

"Guys!" Mike said, raising his voice a little.

"I'm worried about us being considered 'essential workers,'" Mike heard Jason Marks say to another employee. "I mean, I have to come in here and potentially be exposed, and then go home to family."

Another worker said, "Yeah, my mom is in a long-term care facility, and I can't even go visit her anymore."

"My kids are doing the online school thing at home, but me and the wife are having a hard time getting daycare," someone else said.

"C'mon guys!" Mike pleaded. "We have to do this training."

"But Mike, this is the first time we've all been able to get together at the same time, can't we just talk a little while first?" Jason asked.

If you were Mike, what would you do in this situation?

Reader Responses

1 Timothy Messer, Quality Manager, Kongsburg Protech Systems, Johnstown, PA

What Timothy would do: Mike should be empathetic to his employees' concerns and provide some leadership by allowing some discussion.

Reason: Mike is in an excellent position to be not only an active listener but to provide feedback to the management team on the need for top management communication to the work force.

2 Bernadette Funches, Safety Manager, Westrock, Cedar Rapids, IA

What Bernadette would do: Mike should take this opportunity to listen to the concerns of his employees.

Reason: Empathy is all about

reassuring your employees that you are genuinely concerned, and you want to make every effort to hear them out.

3 Gordon Webb, Medical Director, LOHS, Alexandria, LA

What Gordon would do: Use the workers' concerns as examples.

Reason: Use examples of their concerns about the coronavirus to illustrate how changes made in workplace safety can increase their safety at home.

4 Greg Price, Safety Officer, United Chemical Technologies, Bristol, PA

What Greg would do: Mike has to engage the staff where they are, use their family examples and create discussions around how to respond to them and how they interrelate to workplace scenarios.

OUTSIDE THE LINES

FORMER OSHA HEAD HIRED TO HELP RE-OPEN THEATERS

Actors' Equity Association has hired David Michaels, former head of OSHA, to help the union develop a plan for reopening Broadway and other live theaters after the COVID-19 shutdown, according to *Deadline*.

Broadway theaters in New York City have been closed since March 12. There's no announced plan on how they plan to re-open.

"His (Michaels') additional knowledge along with our current safety knowledge is going to help us build out protocols that will make the workplace for our members and all the people backstage as safe as it can be," Equity Executive Director Mary McColl told *Deadline*.

"I think we have one chance at getting this right," McColl said, regarding the re-opening of theaters.

Info: tinyurl.com/bway596

Did you know ...

When an employee gets coronavirus



If a worker becomes sick, **disinfect** their **workstation** and **tools**.

Source: OSHA

OSHA says employees should be encouraged to stay home if they are sick. While at work, they should cover their coughs and sneezes.

Info: tinyurl.com/diduknow596

This feature in each issue of SCA charts trends in national workplace safety and health to help safety professionals perform their jobs.