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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.

What could federal COVID rule look like? Learn from California

■ Q&A on Cal/OSHA standard gives some clues

With the Biden administration officially taking office Jan. 20, a federal COVID-19 emergency temporary standard (ETS) will likely be a priority, but a similar standard enacted in California has caused some confusion for employers.

A federal emergency temporary standard (ETS) will share some aspects to the one Cal/OSHA adopted Nov. 30, so learning the details of that rule could prepare you for what to expect from federal OSHA.

California's Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board conducted a meeting with stakeholders

Dec. 18 to clear up confusion surrounding certain aspects of the new rule, even though Cal/OSHA did provide a guidance FAQ Dec. 3.

Here are some of the key concerns asked at the meeting along with the standard board's responses, courtesy of law firm Littler Mendelson:

Testing requirements

When circumstances trigger employer testing obligations, employers must provide testing at no cost to employees during employee working hours, the ETS states.

This means employees must be

(Please see Federal COVID rule ... on Page 2)

CORONAVIRUS

Feds: COVID exposure more likely for those in office

People who work at the office may be more at risk of contracting COVID-19 than those who work remotely, according to a new report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Researchers who examined possible exposures to COVID-19 among employed adults found that workers who tested positive were almost twice as likely to report regularly commuting to work, compared with the employees studied who tested negative, according to ABC News.

The report is the result of interviews with 310 people tested for COVID-19 in July. About half of that group tested positive, and researchers compared them to a control group of individuals who received negative results.

Most of the people in both groups

were adults who "held full-time, non-essential jobs outside of critical infrastructure" and had similar community exposure to COVID-19 outside of the workplace.

What if telework isn't possible?

The study's results led the CDC to recommend teleworking to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, but if that isn't possible, the agency recommends:

- scaling up safety measures by creating a coronavirus preparedness response plan
- implementing infection prevention and control measures such as social distancing, wearing masks or other PPE, daily health checks and good hygiene practices, and
- enhancing policies to protect employees and the community

ENFORCEMENT

Contractor faces penalty for fatal incident

A U.S. Attorney in Pennsylvania filed one charge of “willful violation of OSHA regulations causing the death of an employee” Nov. 24 for a fatal trench collapse.

On May 22, 2017, a worker employed by R.A. Monzo Construction Company died allegedly due to the willful violation of OSHA standards requiring employers to protect employees from cave-ins, according to court documents.

OSHA issued a willful citation for the incident, and the contractor is currently contesting that violation.

Criminal penalties under OSH Act

However, the criminal charge was brought despite the other proceedings, according to the *National Law Review*.

The contractor could face up to five years of probation, a \$500,000 fine, or both and could be ordered to pay restitution along with the fine.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act generally creates a criminal

penalty against employers who willfully violate a standard and an employee dies as a result.

But the issuance of a willful citation isn’t enough to establish criminal liability because willfulness of an alleged violation must still be proven in criminal proceedings.

If it can be proven, an employer can be fined or even imprisoned.

Federal COVID rule ...

(continued from Page 1)

paid for time spent getting tested, and employers must cover all costs associated with the testing, according to the standards board.

Physical distancing

According to the ETS, “All employees shall be separated from other persons by at least 6 feet, except where an employer can demonstrate that 6 feet of separation is not possible.”

The standards board acknowledged there are certain situations where physical distancing may not be possible, but stated there are no categorical exceptions.

Bottom line: The burden falls on employers to prove physical distancing isn’t possible on a case-by-case basis.

Critical worker exemption

Employers thought the following language in the ETS created an exemption for critical workers:

“If there are no violations of local or state health officer orders for isolation or quarantine, the Division may, upon request, allow employees to return to work on the basis that the removal of an employee would create undue risk to a community’s health and safety.”

Despite the way that section is worded, it is not meant to indicate an automatic exemption, but instead provides employers with a means to request one.

This means employers have to submit “a brief written request” to obtain an exemption.

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.

■ CAN INJURED EMPLOYEE SUE DESPITE GETTING BENEFITS?

It feels like every day is just the same thing over and over, Safety Manager Pete Travers thought.

Pete saw Attorney John Jenkins walking toward him.

Like this, Pete thought, referring to John’s approach. It seems like this happens every day.

John began to speak, but Pete interrupted him.

“Hi Pete, do you have a moment? We need to talk,” Pete said, mimicking John. “OSHA is fining us.”

“Actually, an employee is suing us,” John said, confused.

He can’t work? Or can he?

“Do you remember anything about Anthony Carson?” John asked as they entered his office. “He’s suing the company because he says he wasn’t allowed to return to work after being out on medical leave.”

“Tony worked in production for a few years before he started having bad back pain,” Pete said. “We made ergonomic adjustments to his work station, but none of it helped.

“He went on medical leave and when he came back he had restrictions, so he couldn’t return to his old job,” Pete continued.

“HR offered him several other jobs, but he didn’t apply for any of them,” Pete said. “He filed a comp claim, got benefits and then took disability retirement because he said he couldn’t do his job.”

“Then we can beat this because he proved he couldn’t work before, and now he says he can,” John said.

Pete’s company fought the lawsuit. Did it win?

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

SAFETY COMPLIANCE Alert

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Safety Compliance Alert (ISSN 1077-9787), February 1, 2021, Vol. 27 No. 611, is published semi-monthly except once in December (23 times a year).

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PANDEMIC

Are feds able to handle vaccine logistics?

■ EMPLOYERS MAY BE CALLED ON TO HELP WITH DISTRIBUTION EFFORTS

As vaccines for the coronavirus go before the Food and Drug Administration for approval, the logistics of getting them to the general public are still a work in progress.

For example, some of the vaccines have to be stored at extremely cold temperatures and must be administered within a certain time after defrosting.

In a recent “State of COVID-19 Response” online panel discussion hosted by the National Safety Council (NSC), Arizona State University biomedical diagnostics professor Mara Aspinall predicted that state governments will tap workplaces to be “central logistical hubs” for coronavirus vaccination because “CVS and Walgreens don’t have parking lots big enough” to accommodate the anticipated demand.

“It’s absolutely critical that we do this together,” she said.

This might be a good time to check with your state’s public health department about their coronavirus

vaccine distribution plan, if it could involve your company and what safety measures would have to be taken if called on to administer vaccinations to employees.

Vaccine requirement?

Another member of the NSC panel, Pennsylvania Chamber of Business & Industry President and CEO Gene Barr, commented that employers will have a crucial role to play by sharing the facts about the vaccine with their workers and encouraging them to get vaccinated.

When asked if states could potentially mandate 100% workforce vaccination for some industries, Barr said no because of federal laws that are in place. For example, employees have the right to refuse vaccination if it’s against their sincerely held religious beliefs.

If your company doesn’t already address the vaccine in its COVID-19 policies, now’s the time to start a discussion with leadership to get a sense of how your organization will approach the next phase of pandemic employee safety issues.

STATE STANDARDS

Virginia seeking permanent version of COVID-19 rule

Virginia, the first state to adopt an emergency temporary standard to address COVID-19 in the workplace, is looking to make its temporary standard permanent.

A permanent version of the emergency temporary standard has been proposed by the state’s OSHA for consideration by the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board.

The temporary standard, which was adopted July 27, will expire Jan. 26.

On Jan. 12, the board will meet to discuss the proposed permanent version.

Changes from temporary standard

Virginia OSHA’s proposed standard does not encompass all infectious diseases generally, but

surprisingly continues to focus solely on COVID-19, according to a blog post by law firm Jackson Lewis.

However, there are a few notable changes between the temporary and permanent versions of the standard, including:

- Removal of requirements unrelated to occupational safety and health, such as contingency planning for business operations in the event of an outbreak.
- No enforcement against healthcare providers and other employers making a good faith effort to secure PPE that’s in short supply.
- The permanent standard can’t be used to enforce the governor’s executive orders.

TRENDS TO WATCH

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

■ COURT: USE OF MEDICAL WEED IS NOT A DISABILITY

A Pennsylvania judge ruled Nov. 10 that an employee’s off-duty use of medical marijuana doesn’t qualify as a “disability” under the state’s Human Relations Act (PHRA).

Pamela Palmiter, a certified medical marijuana user, worked at Moses Taylor Hospital and was fired January 2019 after a positive drug test for marijuana.

Palmiter filed two lawsuits against the hospital, claiming it violated the state Medical Marijuana Act (MMA) and the PHRA.

She argued her medical marijuana use was a “disability” under the PHRA, according to law firm Montgomery McCracken Walker & Rhoads.

The judge ruled the PHRA’s definition of “disability” excludes current, legal use of a controlled substance as defined in the federal Controlled Substances Act and there was no requirement for employers to accommodate use, even when legally prescribed under the MMA.

However, this decision does not address whether an employee can assert claims against an employer under the MMA.

■ REPORTS OF IMPOSTORS POSING AS INSPECTORS

Nevada OSHA recently received reports of people posing as inspectors.

Initial reports came from northern Nevada, but southern Nevada eventually saw an uptick as well, according to 8 News Now.

The state agency reminds businesses that OSHA inspectors can’t issue a citation on the spot due to agency protocols, so if someone comes in demanding payment of a fine, that should be a red flag.

There has been no obvious pattern for the types of businesses targeted by the impostors.

Roundup of most recent OSHA citations

Tree-care worker killed by falling branch: \$12K fine

An Indiana tree-cutting business was cited after a worker was killed when a tree branch fell on him.

Michael Lusher was killed June 1 when he walked into the drop zone clearing area of a work site and was struck by a falling branch.

Indiana OSHA inspectors cited the company under “a national standard for arboricultural operations that call for workers ‘not directly involved in the removal operation to be clear of the work area ... beyond the length of the tree, unless a team of workers is necessary to remove a particular tree,’” according to the *Muncie Star Press*.

Fine: \$12,000

Company: That Tree Feller LLC, Daleville, IN

Business: Ornamental shrub and tree services

Reasons for fine:

One serious violation for failure to:

- follow American National Standards Institute recommendations for arboricultural operations involving workers being clear of work area if not directly involved in removal operation

One non-serious violation for failure to:

- report worker fatality within eight hours

\$92K fine for company with history of safety violations

A Washington-based construction company with an almost 20-year history of safety violations was cited by the state’s Department of Labor & Industries for failing to enforce use of fall protection at a residential construction site.

The current citation was the result of an anonymous tip in May that included photographs of four employees working on a steep pitch roof with no fall protection installed.

Inspectors also found employees weren’t wearing masks or social distancing, which are violations of the state’s COVID-19 workplace safety rules.

The company has been cited for more than two dozen serious and repeat safety violations after being inspected 26 times since 2001, according to an L&I news release.

Seven of those inspections were conducted within the last three years and led to more than \$200,000 in fines.

Fine: \$92,000

Company: Cloise & Mike Construction Inc., formerly Choice & Mike Construction, Bremerton, WA

Business: New single-family housing construction

Reasons for fine:

Nine serious violations for failure to:

- enforce use of fall protection at a residential construction site
- provide fall protection for employees working 4 feet or more above lower levels while on a steep pitch
- implement fall protection work plans
- comply with COVID-19 protections in construction
- provide effective training programs
- ensure hard hats were worn while working under roofers
- ensure hands were kept free while ascending ladders
- extend ladders 3 feet above landing surfaces
- implement walk-around safety inspections

Respirator violations at Indiana nursing facility

An Indiana nursing care facility was cited for two serious coronavirus-related respirator violations involving a charge nurse required to wear an N95 respirator in the COVID unit.

Fine: \$14,000

Company: Signature HealthCARE of Newburgh, Newburgh, IN

Business: Nursing care facility

Reasons for fine:

Two serious violations for failure to:

- develop effective respirator protection program
- ensure employees were medically evaluated before using respirators

WORKERS’ COMP DECISIONS

Accused of injuring herself on purpose: Benefits?

A truck driver was injured in a crash her employer said was a deliberate attempt. Could she collect benefits?

What happened: The truck driver attempted to exit from a highway at 67 mph when the speed limit was 35 mph. She managed to slow down to 47 mph, but as she entered a curve in the roadway the truck rolled over, causing her injuries.

Company’s reaction: This was a deliberate attempt to injure yourself, so your injuries are not compensable.

Decision: She could collect. The court said video evidence of the crash proved a lack of good judgment, but not a deliberate act of injury.

Cite: *Matter of McGee v. Johnson Equipment Sales and Service*, NY Court of Appeals, No. 529807, 6/4/20.

Can he collect benefits on a pre-existing foot condition?

A worker with diabetes claimed his job aggravated a pre-existing foot condition, leading to a work-related injury. Can he collect?

What happened: The worker had a condition – a result of his diabetes – that caused bone loss in his feet. He worked 10 hours per day and spent most of that time on ladders, which aggravated his condition and caused an injury to his right foot.

Company’s reaction: Your foot injury was caused by your diabetes, not your job.

Decision: He could collect. The court found the worker offered enough medical evidence to prove his job aggravated his foot condition.

Cite: *Traugott v. ARCTEC Alaska*, AK Supreme Court, No. S-17126, 6/12/20.

REAL PROBLEMS, REAL SOLUTIONS

Get constructive outcomes from conflict

Conflict management is a necessary soft skill for safety professionals.

It allows you to turn what may seem like negative reactions into positive outcomes for everyone in a given situation.

From simple disagreements to crisis management, assessing the root cause is essential in resolving a conflict.

Smart leaders recognize that conflict may also improve a situation by using the options proposed by others in resolution as organizational improvements.

Opposing mindsets

For example, imagine there is a worker, Ralph, who objects to wearing a personal sampling pump even though he has the most direct contact with a hazardous substance he filed a complaint about.

Ralph says the pump makes it hard for him to move around and do his job when it's clipped to his belt.

The safety professional, Sally, talks to Ralph and recognizes he's inconvenienced but points out the pump is the best way to get a sample to assess the plant's ventilation system.

Sally also points out that Ralph's complaint was what brought her out to the plant in the first place.

She complains about having to drive so far out of her way, and Ralph complains that the sampling process probably won't result in a change anyway.

There are two mindsets at play in this situation: My Way and Your Way.

Sally responds to Ralph's complaint with her My Way mindset, focusing solely on the complaint, which conflicts with Ralph's Your Way mindset and his refusal to wear the pump.

We know Sally is feeling put out because of the time it took her to travel out to the plant.

She's also upset since she's honestly there to do something constructive to help solve Ralph's problem.

For Ralph, his statement about

the probable lack of change shows he's feeling it's an "us versus them" conflict.

Listen, ask questions

Now, re-imagine this scenario with Sally immediately offering an alternate method of wearing the sampling pump, and upon further protest from Ralph, asking if there was something more going on that she wasn't aware of.

This would lead to Ralph telling Sally the work being done was short term, that's why he said nothing would probably be done about it.

Further questioning by Sally reveals this short-term project involves materials that contain more lead along with a new bonding agent containing formaldehyde.

Sally realizes this means the ventilation system will need to be adjusted to deal with these new elements.

By picking up on Ralph's comment that nothing would change, Sally was

Our Way builds on a shared goal.

able to probe deeper about what was different in the plant and discovered what the real problem was.

By building on the shared goal of Ralph's welfare at work, they were able to achieve a better Our Way solution and improve the situation for all the employees affected by the different materials being used in the plant.

Understanding there are two sides to conflicts involving My Way and Your Way is important to develop an understanding of both these mindsets so the parties involved in the conflict can transcend to an Our Way sort of thinking.

(Based on a presentation by Celia Booth, Principal Consultant, Booth McCaffery LLC, Hanover, MD, at AIHce 2020)

TRAINING TIPS

When working at height, a ladder isn't always right

When a worker needs to reach a higher area, what's the first thing they usually reach for? Probably a ladder, right?

While ladders – and especially stepladders – are commonly used, they may not always be the best option.

OSHA says workers should ask themselves these questions before deciding to use a ladder:

- Will I have to hold heavy items while on the ladder?
- Is the elevated area high enough it would require a long ladder that could be unstable?
- Will I be working from this height for a long time?
- Do I have to stand on the ladder sideways to do this work?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then a worker should consider using equipment such as a scissor lift instead of a ladder.

Or, if a ladder has to be used, use one with a working platform that has handrail barricades on the sides, such as a platform stepladder.

Fatal incident illustrates importance of wearing PPE

A recent Indiana OSHA citation involving a fatal struck-by incident is a perfect example of why it's important for workers to wear their PPE.

The worker was inspecting a trench and wasn't wearing a hard hat or high-visibility clothing.

An excavator was being used in the area, and its operator – who wasn't aware of the employee in the trench – struck the worker, killing him.

Investigators found the use of a hard hat and high-visibility clothing could have protected the worker.

OSHA INITIATIVE

Late fines could lead to placement on inspection priority list

Federal OSHA announced a new debt collection initiative involving a series of letters, a phone call and eventual placement on an inspection priority list.

The initiative begins with a series of penalty payment letters sent to businesses who don't pay fines on time and eventually leads to the employer being placed on an inspection priority list if a fine goes unpaid.

Penalty payment letters

Penalty payment letters will be sent seven, 30 and 60 days after a business fails to pay a penalty on time based on a final order, and employers will also be contacted by phone 14 days after the payment comes due.

Businesses that pay fines on time will not receive any letters or calls.

If the fine isn't paid, and the business isn't on an affordable payment plan, "OSHA will place the establishment on a priority list for further inspection," according to a Department of Labor news release.

Additionally, OSHA inspectors will gather employer identification numbers as part of the pre-inspection preparation.

This will "ensure that firms with safety and health violations are held

accountable and pay their debts to the United States Government."

23 stores cited: Failed to comply with COVID rules

Ohio health officials cited 23 retail stores for not following state-mandated mask and social distancing rules in the first week of December.

Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation investigators gave each store a warning, and subsequent violations could result in a business being closed for up to 24 hours.

Investigators began inspecting retail stores in November after the state issued a stricter mask order, according to the Cincinnati Enquirer.

This order requires stores to:

- post a sign at the entrance indicating masks are required
- post a maximum capacity limit to ensure social distancing can be maintained
- place markers on the floor to help with social distancing for customers standing in lines, and
- designate an on-site compliance officer for each business location.

The businesses cited were in 13 different counties and include a mix of mom-and-pop stores, gas stations and "big-name retailers such as Walmart and Lowe's."

Records-only inspections added to target program

OSHA's Site-Specific Targeting Directive was updated Dec. 16 with a new targeting category and records-only inspections for situations involving incorrect data.

This inspection program directs enforcement resources to non-construction employers with 20 or more employees who have the highest rates of injuries and illnesses.

The new directive replaces "Site-Specific Targeting 2016" and includes some significant changes, including:

- the creation of a new targeting category for establishments with consistent injury and illness rate increases over a three-year data collection period, and
- the allowance of records-only inspections when an inspector determines incorrect data led to an establishment's inclusion in the program.

SHARPEN YOUR JUDGMENT – THE DECISION

(see case on Page 2)

Yes, Pete's company won when the court dismissed the employee's lawsuit.

The employee claimed he wasn't allowed to return to work after he went out on medical leave even though he could have with reasonable accommodations.

But the company reminded the court that the employee had previously proved to the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board that he couldn't perform his job duties when he applied for disability retirement benefits.

The court found the employee could not move forward with a lawsuit claiming he was prevented from working by his employer when he already won a previous award by proving he could no longer perform his essential job duties.

Further, the court found the company did engage in the interactive process to try to accommodate his medical restrictions prior to his retirement.

■ ANALYSIS: REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Employers are required to attempt to reasonably accommodate medical restrictions for an employee's work-related injury.

This case is a good example of what those reasonable accommodations can look like. For example, the employer attempted ergonomic solutions to help with the worker's back pain – even before medical restrictions were imposed – and then offered him multiple other positions when it became apparent he could no longer do his old job.

Cite: *Lopez v. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority*, California Court of Appeals, No. B296598, 12/14/20. 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.

TRANSPORTATION

While overall large-truck crash fatality and injury numbers remained close to 2018 totals, the number of deaths for large-truck occupants in multiple-vehicle crashes, and overall occupant injuries, both rose by more than 10% in 2019.

Data from the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on 2019 crash statistics for large trucks show a 13% increase in occupant fatalities in multiple-vehicle crashes involving large trucks and an 18% increase in occupant injuries in crashes involving large trucks.

There were 892 large-truck occupant deaths in 2019 compared to 890 in 2018.

While that number remains relatively unchanged, the totals involving multiple- and single-vehicle crashes show a more dramatic difference.

In 2019, there were 397 large-truck occupant deaths in multiple-vehicle crashes compared to 352 in 2018, a 13% increase, while occupant deaths in single-vehicle crashes dropped from 538 in 2018 to 495 in 2019 – an 8% drop.

Injuries of large-truck occupants resulting from crashes rose from 39,000 in 2018 to 46,000 in 2019, an 18% increase.

Single-vehicle crashes resulting in occupant injuries rose 15% in 2019 – from 13,000 in 2018 to 15,000 in 2019 – and multiple-vehicle crashes also saw a 15% increase in occupant injuries, with 26,000 in 2018 and 30,000 in 2019.

DRUG OVERDOSES

There were more than 81,000 drug overdose deaths in the U.S. in the 12 months ending in May 2020 – the highest number ever recorded in a 12-month period, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Overdose deaths were already increasing in the months before the coronavirus pandemic, and the CDC's latest numbers suggest the pandemic may have accelerated this trend.

Synthetic opioids such as fentanyl – which is often manufactured illegally – seem to be the primary driver of the rising numbers, with overdose deaths increasing 38.4% from the 12-month period leading up to June 2019 compared with a similar period leading up to May 2020, according to the CDC.

This increase in overdose deaths “highlights the need for essential services to remain accessible for people most at risk of overdose and the need to expand prevention and response activities.”

In response to the increase in overdose deaths, the CDC recommends:

- expanding distribution and use of naloxone – a medication used to rapidly reverse an overdose – and overdose prevention education
- expanding awareness about, access to and availability of treatment for substance use disorders
- early intervention with individuals at highest risk for overdose, and
- improving detection of overdose outbreaks to facilitate more effective response.

CDL TESTING

A new U.S. Department of Transportation rule allows states to permit third-party skills test examiners to give the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) skills test to the same applicants they've trained.

Federal rules previously prohibited this, but the new rule eliminates the restriction and permits states to allow third-party skills trainers to conduct testing regardless of whether they trained the applicant.

The rule is meant to alleviate testing delays and eliminate inconvenience and expense to the CDL applicant.

WHERE TO GET HELP

STANDARD ADDRESSES SAFETY ON SHARED JOBSITES

The American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) jointly introduced a revised standard meant to help keep construction workers on multi-employer sites safe by describing best practices for improving safety programs.

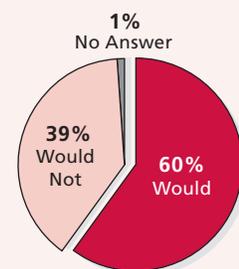
Safety and Health Program Requirements for Multi-Employer Projects (ANSI/ASSP A10.33-2020) “identifies key elements organizations should use to create and manage a safety program in a shared construction project,” according to an ASSP news release.

Standards like this address gaps in regulatory standards and are meant to make worksites safer.

More information about the revised standard can be found in the store on the ASSP website.

What safety pros say

How many Americans say they'll get a COVID-19 vaccination when it becomes available?



Source: Pew Research Center

Of those who said they would get the vaccine, 29% said they would definitely get it and 31% said they probably would. Eighteen percent said they definitely would not.

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?

Vaccine is coming to the workplace, but one worker feels it's not safe

The Scenario

Manager Mike Kelly was the happiest he'd been in months.

"We just got the news that we'll be getting the COVID-19 vaccination pretty soon since we're a critical business," Mike said as he walked into the conference room.

All the supervisors – who were already there for a meeting with the safety committee – cheered.

"That's great!" Janet Costello said.

"Awesome!" said Ken Dawson.

"It's about time," Jack Hall said. "But I guess the government moved as fast as it could."

I'm not sure I want it'

A few hours after the meeting, Mike was in his office reviewing his notes for an upcoming safety meeting

when there was a knock at his door. "Come in," Mike said, pulling his mask up over his mouth and nose.

The door opened, and a forklift operator, James Donner, entered.

"Hey James, how are you? Can I help you with something?" Mike asked.

"I'm OK, Mike," James replied, but he continued to stand in the doorway, clearly wanting to talk about something.

"Actually, I'm a little freaked out, Mike," James said.

"What's wrong?" Mike asked. "Was there an incident?"

"I heard we'll be getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and I'm not sure I want it," James said. "I mean, the government rushed it through, so how safe is it really?"

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

of Defense could require proof of vaccination to enter a military base.

Reader Responses

1 Morris Elkins, Corporate Health/Safety Manager, Tega LLC, Colorado Springs, CO

What Morris would do: Managing a mandatory vaccine program would cause a significant number of other questions, such as:

- In the case of multiple doses required for proper vaccine protocol, who will be tracking the two doses?
- Will employees be given paid time off for the two doses?
- If an employee experiences severe side effects from a dose, will it become a workers' compensation case?

Reason: I am not a fan of mandatory vaccinations, but it might be imposed by a federal or state agency. For example, the Department

2 Sharon Collins, Safety Coordinator, Wilmad LabGlass, Vineland, NJ

What Sharon would do: The employee's concern is valid.

Even though the three-step process was adhered to, I think that the very fact the process was sped up is an issue.

Although I will likely take the vaccine when it becomes available to me.

However, I have never agreed with mandatory vaccination.

Reason: It is really up to the company whether it will make getting the vaccine mandatory or voluntary, and in that case, decisions like this will have to be made based on how the company decides to handle the situation.

OUTSIDE THE LINES

AUSTRALIAN TOWN SURVIVES 'HAIRY PANIC' PHENOMENON

A town in Australia reported a record 14 feet of ... tumbleweeds!

You thought I was going to say snow, I'm sure, but no, high winds in a Melbourne suburb brought an onslaught of tumbleweeds like something out of a weird horror or science-fiction film.

The so-called "hairy panic" resulted in stacks of tumbleweeds – 14-feet high in some areas – that trapped people inside their homes.

High winds and native grass created the tumbleweeds and pushed them into the town, where residents had to clear paths to get out of their homes, only to have it all come tumbling back the next day, according to NPR.

While I'm sure tumbleweeds have associated safety hazards (fire? slip, trip and fall?), I'd bet shoveling them is easier on the back than snow.

Did you know ...

Employees should never use portable generators indoors



Using portable generators indoors can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning, which could result in illness or even death.

Source: OSHA

Portable generators can expose workers to carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless, odorless and toxic gas. Signs of CO poisoning include dizziness, headaches, nausea and confusion.

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