



SAFETY BRIEF: SEASONAL/TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

Seasonal workers make up a large percentage of our workforces. These workers are either brand new to the job or haven't used their skills since the previous season. Generally the bulk of seasonal work takes place in the summer, which can pose work hazards not present during other parts of the year. For example, here in Alaska, some locations replace snow blowers with power operated lawn mowers.

Case Study: New Employee – No Training! : California food manufacturing facility, October 2018

A 19-year-old temporary employee was cleaning a dough rolling machine when his left hand was partially pulled into the moving rollers, cutting off 2 of his fingers. This was the employee's first time cleaning the machine. The CAL/OSHA investigation found that the machine had not been adequately guarded to prevent fingers from entering pinch points and was not de-energized and locked out to prevent movement while the employee was cleaning it. The food company was fined \$276,435 by CAL/OSHA, including one willful repeat serious accident-related violation for failing to follow lockout/tagout procedures (the company was cited twice in 2015 for the exact same violations).

Could this have been worse? *Yes*. Could this have been prevented? *Yes*.

Reasons for Seasonal Worker Injuries

- **Lack of Safety Training:**
Over the years, multiple studies reveal that that seasonal/temporary workers suffer higher rates of injury than permanent workers do. A study from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found 349 temporary workers were killed on the job between 2003 and 2017. One of the leading causes for temporary worker injuries is the lack of safety training. A study in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* revealed that seasonal/temporary workers are less likely to receive safety training but are more likely to file workers' compensation claims than permanent workers. By state and federal law, employers are required to train seasonal/temporary workers the same as permanent workers. Since temporary employees work at various types of jobs for a short amount of time, their lack of experience and safety training often combine to cause a greater probability of injury.
- **Unfamiliar with Worksite Hazards:**
Seasonal workers may not be familiar with the hazards on the jobsite and may be less likely to report hazards in the workplace. Employers should be aware of the specific hazards of each job and the need for extra training and safety measures.

Tips to Provide a Safe Workplace for Seasonal Employees:

- **Safety Culture Attitude & Approach**
Safety should be a priority at all times. The more safety is discussed and reinforced, whether at staff meetings, safety briefs, or trainings, the more important and meaningful it will be to the seasonal employee (and all employees).



- **Training, Training, Training!**

When a seasonal employee is hired, it is important that safety training begins immediately. Workers will need to be educated on your policies and procedures, including the emergency action plan and how to report safety concerns, incidents, or accidents. Seasonal employees should be trained on the specific job function(s) they will perform, including how to safely perform the job. These new and/or experienced workers should receive training on such topics as personal protective equipment (PPE), proper lifting, preventing slips and falls, and Hazard Communication.

Employers should never assume a new employee understands the job task assigned or the job's associated hazards. Training and evaluation is the only way employers can verify that seasonal employees have the knowledge and skills to conduct the job safely

- **Teamwork**

One good way to train and supervise your inexperienced seasonal employee(s) is to team them up with a skilled employee who can teach them how to do the job safely and provide feedback on their skill development. Safety procedures and trainings should be constantly reinforced through supervision, follow-up, and consequences.

- **Address Specific Job Hazards**

Worksites vary depending on the nature of work being conducted. Safety trainings should reflect and be relevant toward the specific hazards of the job. If the job involves working from heights, extra training should be provided regarding fall protection, specific scaffolding of the workplace, and the appropriate safety measures. If the job involves working with specific machines or equipment, or operating vehicles, focus on proper use and safety protocols such as lockout/tagout, machine guarding, and safe operating procedures. Employers should never assume that new workers will learn on their own.

- **PPE**

Employers are responsible for providing each employee with appropriate, properly fitted personal protective equipment (PPE). Training must also be provided for any employee required to use PPE. Employers must evaluate the hazards faced by workers and identify the PPE needed for the tasks that they perform. Safety boots and hardhats should be worn in public works shops and garages, on construction sites, and anywhere there is a potential for crushing or piercing injuries. Glasses, goggles, or face shields should be worn when performing any task where there is flying debris. Hand protection is needed to avoid cuts or punctures when handling abrasive or sharp objects, such as splintered wood and brush. Respiratory protection must be provided when the supply of fresh air is inadequate (teens may not work in any environment that requires more than a paper face mask). Employees are responsible for wearing appropriate attire for each task. Entangling injuries may result from accidents involving jewelry and/or loose clothing or long hair in close proximity to tools or machinery.



- **Slips, Trips, and Falls**

Every year, the AMLJIA pays approximately \$950K in total claims for slips, trips and falls. With that said, every employee must be responsible for keeping his/her workplace safe from slip, trip, and fall hazards. It is simply a matter of good housekeeping. These housekeeping methods can prevent slips, trips, and fall hazards:

- Keep all work areas, passageways, storerooms, and service rooms clean and orderly and in a sanitary condition.
- Maintain all floors in a clean and, as much as possible, a dry condition. Where wet conditions are present, drainage gratings, mats, or raised platforms need to be used.
- Keep floors, work areas and passageways free from protruding nails, splinters, holes, or loose boards.

Teach employees to take the following precautions to avoid slips, trips, and falls:

- Clean footwear thoroughly before entering the building;
- Use handrails provided with stairs and ramps;
- Practice ladder safety;
- Properly assemble and secure scaffolds;
- Use toe boards to prevent tools from falling off scaffolding;
- Tape down or remove extension cords in walkways;
- Wear appropriate footwear for the jobsite; and
- Report any equipment or supplies left in walkways.

- **Safe Lifting**

An estimated 8 out of 10 people suffer a back injury during their lifetime. Back injuries can occur regardless of age simply by lifting in the wrong manner or improperly carrying a heavy load. The following steps identify the correct way to lift a load and reduce the chance of straining or spraining the back:

1. Size up the load—assess the load before lifting by slowly applying force against the object. Make sure the load is stable and balanced. If the load is too heavy, ask for assistance.
2. Plan the job. Find the easiest route that is free of tripping and slipping hazards.
3. Set up a good base of support. Keep feet shoulder-width apart, and one foot slightly behind the other, to provide a stable lifting base.
4. Bend at the knees, not the waist. Squat down as far as necessary using your legs, not your back.
5. Get a good grip. Grasp firmly, using both hands.
6. Keep the load close. Less force is exerted on your back if you keep the load close to your body with your back upright.
7. Keep your head up and your shoulders back, lifting with your legs. Use your strong calf and thigh muscles to lift, flexing at the knee and hip joints.
8. Pivot, don't twist. When changing directions, turn your entire body, pivoting on your feet.



- **Beware of Fatigue**

Extended daylight hours and warm weather encourage many employers to extend work hours, which may cause fatigue. A longer workday is fine as long as there are appropriate breaks and attention to safety.

- **Restrictions on Young Workers**

Employers must be aware of restrictions on young employees. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development has identified a list of hazardous occupations which cannot be performed by those under the age of 18. These restrictions are listed in the Summary of Alaska Child Labor Law at <http://labor.alaska.gov/lss/childlaw.htm>.

Regardless of whether workers are temporary or permanent, all workers have the right to a safe and healthful workplace. This includes receiving the same training and PPE. Although seasonal workers are only employed for a short time, they should receive the same training, PPE, and supervision they need to work safely.

Additional training is available through the AMLJIA Online University at www.amljia.org. Log on to the Online University for courses related on this topic such as “Safety Awareness for Seasonal Employees,” “New Employee Safety Orientation,” “Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls,” “Back Safety,” and “Working Outdoors in Warm Weather.” For more information about the Online University, contact the AMLJIA at 800-337-3682.