

# The Safety & Health Advisor

## Fall 2020



### **Severe Weather Preparedness**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has forecasted an “Extremely active” Atlantic hurricane season for 2020. In addition to hurricanes, severe weather such as thunderstorms, lightning, and tornados can also create extreme hazards, putting organizations at risk. Employers should consider these potential hazards, and evaluate their emergency management plans to assure adequate preparedness.

#### ***Weather Tip***

***The National Weather Service may issue severe weather watches or warnings.***

- ***A watch means that conditions are favorable for development, and you should be aware and monitor weather information.***
- ***A warning means that activity has been sighted or detected by radar and you should take protective actions immediately***

The Emergency Management Plan should include several components to assist organizations with identifying emergency functions needed to adequately prepare, respond, and recover from a severe weather event. A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is designed to identify essential functions and plan for the continuation of these functions during a disaster or emergency. A COOP establishes priorities and procedures to ensure delivery of essential operations within the organization, and provide for alternate methods and locations of operations.

Preparation is essential for evacuation planning. Determine in advance the nearest exit from work locations, and the route employees will follow to reach that exit in an emergency. Perform inspections regularly to assure emergency evacuation signage is posted in buildings.

#### ***Highlights in this Issue***

*Severe Weather Preparedness*

*Fire Prevention*

*Seasonal Flu Shots*

*Healthcare – Disinfecting Safe Patient Handling Equipment*

*October – National Protect Your Hearing Month*

*Massachusetts DIA - Workplace Safety Grant Program*

Employees should be trained in identifying routes that do not require elevator access, and assembly points outside of the building. Establish an alternate route to be used in the event a route is blocked or unsafe. Emergency evacuation drills should also be performed at least annually.

Emergency weather conditions may create chemical, biological, or imminent danger requiring direction of employees to “Shelter in Place”, rather than evacuating the building. Depending on the type of emergency, directions to shelter in place may be sent by various communication means, including siren/loudspeaker systems, dedicated alarm systems, digital screens, and text messaging.

For additional information and assistance, click on the links below, and be sure to contact your Atlantic Charter Safety & Health Consultant.

NOAA Storm Prediction Center:

<https://www.spc.noaa.gov/>

Plan for Schools

<https://www.weather.gov/media/grr/brochures/swep.pdf>

Tornado Preparedness

<https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/tornado/preparedness.html>

Severe Weather Safety Checklist

<https://www.weather.gov/oun/safety-severe-checklist>

OSHA Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/eap.html>

### **Fire Prevention**

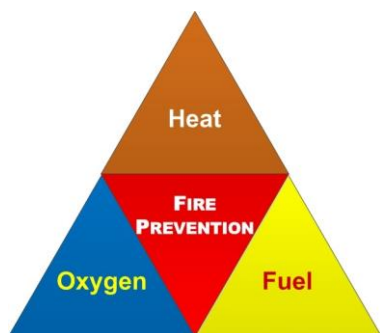
October 4-10, 2020 is the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) annual Fire Prevention Week. This year’s NFPA theme is “Serve Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen!™”.

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Whether you operate a kitchen at your facility or not, this is a good opportunity for organizations to consider focusing on overall fire prevention in the workplace.

Organizations with a safety or Joint Loss Management committee may want those individuals to facilitate an employee education or awareness campaign on this topic.



First, the work environment needs to be evaluated for potential fire risks. Those risks will vary depending on whether you are a manufacturer, warehouse, healthcare facility, restaurant, office or a construction site. Understanding the setting can help with identification of risks and implementation of fire prevention measures to address them.

Some common fire hazards in the workplace may include:

- Cooking areas (i.e. kitchens, kitchenettes)
- Smoking materials
- Open flames (i.e. candles/incense)
- Electrical hazards (i.e. wiring, damaged extension cords, appliances and equipment)
- Accumulation of combustible materials (i.e. papers, boxes, oily rags)
- Improper handling and storage of combustible/flammable liquids or gases
- Use of Halogen lamps
- [Space heaters](#) – see the information link below

<https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/PortableHeaterSafety.ashx>

- Hot work hazards (i.e., cutting, welding) – *May also require a fire watch*

While only required in specific circumstances, the OSHA standard 1910.39 - Fire Prevention Plans is a recommended resource for employers. The recommended plan addresses the following items.

- List all major fire hazards, proper handling and storage procedures for hazardous materials, potential ignition sources and their control, and the type of fire protection equipment necessary to control each major hazard;
- Procedures to control accumulations of flammable and combustible waste materials;
- Procedures for regular maintenance of safeguards installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent the accidental ignition of combustible materials;
- The name or job title of employees responsible for maintaining equipment to prevent or control sources of ignition or fires; and
- The name or job title of employees responsible for the control of fuel source hazards.



OSHA has a safety and health topics webpage about fire safety at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/firesafety/>

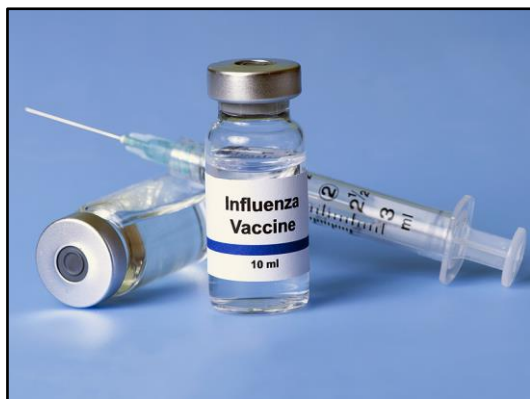
If you want to share this year's Fire Prevention Week information about fire prevention in the home with employees, the NFPA resource information may be found at:

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Staying-safe/Preparedness/Fire-Prevention-Week>

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### Seasonal Flu Shots



*The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that last season, fewer than half of Americans got a flu vaccine and at least 410,000 people were hospitalized from flu. Increased vaccination coverage would reduce that burden. The symptoms of the seasonal flu and COVID-19, are almost indistinguishable. Getting a flu shot is more important than ever during 2020-2021 to protect yourself and the people around you from flu and to reduce the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Flu Shots are now available at local pharmacies, PCP offices, Urgent Care walk-ins, etc. and are typically covered by insurance. It is recommended to get your flu shot early, as there is expected to be a higher than normal demand and hopefully an adequate supply for all. The ideal time frame to get your Flu Shot is between now and early November. For more details, check out the following links:*

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/flushot.htm>,  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccinations.htm> and <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2020-2021.htm>.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting Safe Patient Handling Equipment**

A study by the US National Institutes of Health has shown that the virus that causes COVID-19 can survive on surfaces such as plastic and stainless steel surfaces for up to several days<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore during the ongoing pandemic it is even more important to ensure that safe patient handling (SPH) equipment is kept clean and disinfected to avoid the risk for cross contamination. The World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines on the management of COVID-19 patients also emphasize the importance of using disposable or dedicated equipment if possible.

In early March, EPA released its "List N", Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 which continues to be updated. It is searchable and sortable, comes with helpful tips on how to use disinfectants properly, and features frequently asked questions to ensure correct product usage. As with any EPA-registered product, carefully read the label and only use the product as described in its directions and approved for use by the equipment manufacturer.

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

It also important to consider the lift/device itself, sling attachments, its control buttons, and other high touch surfaces to reduce the risk for cross contamination. Many disinfectants need stay on the surfaces for several minutes before being wiped off to be fully effective.

In some cases the chemicals can be harmful and damage sensitive touch screens /controls which are other important cleaning considerations. Finally never use the disinfectant in combination with other types of cleaning agents since they could be incompatible and create toxic vapors (ie; never mix bleach and ammonia).

<sup>1</sup> van Doremalen N, Bushmaker T, Morris DH, et al. Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1. N Engl J Med. 2020; 382(16):1564-1567

### **National Protect Your Hearing Month**

October is National Protect Your Hearing Month. The goal of this annual campaign is to raise awareness about noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) and share easy steps that people can take to protect their hearing.

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While this campaign is primarily focused on causes and prevention of 'off-the-job' NIHL, it presents employers with an opportunity to review 'on-the-job' prevention of NIHL with employees too.

NIHL is among the most common work-related illnesses. Workers are faced with occupational noise hazards every day. In the United States, hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition after high blood pressure and arthritis. According to a 2018 survey, more than 4 out of 5 American adults never, or very rarely, wear hearing protection at loud sports events or entertainment venues (granted this isn't a concern now during the pandemic). **Hearing loss from loud noise is permanent — and most people don't notice their hearing is damaged until it's too late.**

Everyday sounds typically do not damage your hearing. However, many people participate in activities that produce harmful sound levels, such as listening to loud music and using power tools which repeated over time will cause hearing loss. Loud sound (noise) can damage sensitive parts of the ear, causing hearing loss, ringing or buzzing in the ear (tinnitus), and increased sensitivity to sound (hyperacusis). Repeated exposure to loud noise over the years affects how well one hears later in life and how quickly one develops hearing problems, even after exposure has stopped. It's better to wear hearing protectors now rather than having to wear hearing aids later!

Click on [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing\\_loss/toolkit/protect\\_hearing\\_month.html#\\_ftn1](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/toolkit/protect_hearing_month.html#_ftn1) for additional details about this annual campaign. See [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing\\_loss/](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/) for resources including recognizing early signs of NIHL and steps that can be taken to protect hearing. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/default.html> provides information on occupational hearing loss.

### **Workplace Safety Grant Program**

The Massachusetts Department of Industrial Accidents began accepting applications for its Workplace Safety Grant Program (WSGP) on June 1, 2020 ending on December 31, 2020.

The primary purpose is designed to fund programs that reduce the risk of injury and illness to workers and promote safety and health conditions in the workplace. **Each year the Grant program offers a maximum of \$25,000 to qualifying Massachusetts businesses and organizations with strong preference being given to first time applicants. Training grants must be 'matched' at least dollar-for-dollar by the grantee.** Several Atlantic Charter insureds have been awarded these grants which was primarily used for employee safety training.

Additional details about the WSGP including the application can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy-21-safety-grant-and-contractual-documents/download>. See <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dia-safety-training-providers-list/download> for a list of safety training vendors.

*If you need assistance in evaluating your ergonomics or safety and health program, please contact Neal Freedman, John Cotnam, Mark Hickox or Rick Muller from Atlantic Charter's Safety and Health Department at (617) 488-6500.*