

Don't be a statistic, watch for workplace hazards

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Millions of workers receive serious injuries on the job every year. Most of these injuries can be prevented if the hazards are identified and controlled ahead of time. Conducting a worksite assessment is essential. Injuries can be tragic to employees and can cost billions of dollars each year.

A Weights and Measures Inspector may be exposed to many hazards each day. It is important to identify and eliminate any potential hazards that may exist on the inspection site.

Take a moment and consider the potential hazards that exist for the inspector while inspecting a gas station, vehicle scale, liquefied petroleum gas meter on any other weights and measures inspection. A hazard assessment will help identify, eliminate or control unsafe work situations.

Potential hazards

Hazards exist in many different forms.

An inspector should look for potential hazards prior to and during the inspection. Hazards may include but are not limited to the following:

- Layout of the inspection site
- Chemicals
- Moving objects (i.e. machinery, people)
- Flying objects
- Compression
- Electrical connections
- Noise
- Slippery surfaces
- Falling objects
- Sharp edges that cut, poke or jab
- Temperatures
- Rolling or pinching objects
- Biological hazards such as blood or other infectious material.

Every possible effort to eliminate a hazard should be made. Identifying hazards is an important aspect of conducting a weights and measures inspection and should be an integral part of developing a safety program.

Questions to consider

Document hazards and thoroughly answer the following questions.

1. – What could possibly go wrong?
2. – What would the result be if I came into contact with the hazard?
3. – How could I come into contact with the hazard?
4. – What other factors may contribute to the hazard?

Source of the hazard

Inspectors should also identify potential sources of hazards prior to inspection. These may include the following:

- Electricity
- People
- Harmful dust
- Situations where movement may exist that could result in an impact between personnel and equipment.
- Extreme temperatures that could result in burns, fire or eye injuries.
- Hazardous materials / chemical types
- Ignition sources

Accident Prevention

When considering prevention, take three control methods into account:

- 1- Engineering Controls
Physically alter equipment or environment to prevent coming into contact with a hazard.
- 2- Administrative Controls
If possible, displace the hazard from the inspector's exposure.
- 3- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Select PPE that will provide a level of protection greater than the minimum required to protect inspectors from hazards. PPE condition and age should be evaluated periodically.
PPE should be required when necessary. This may include gloves, hard hats, goggles, safety glasses and shoes, etc.

Consider the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

Job hazard assessment is only effective if preventive actions are taken. Perform a hazard assessment regularly to tell whether you have eliminated or controlled existing hazards, or if any new hazards have developed. Look for new hazards whenever you change equipment, materials, or work processes. Remember, it is better to be safe and not sorry than to overlook a crucial element.

Positive supervision and continued training encourage appropriate actions by the weights and measures inspector.

Source: www.osha.gov