

# SAFETY ZONE

Volume 1, Issue 3  
MARCH 2001

## TOM'S CORNER: A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY SAFETY OFFICER

### Following Through On Workers Worries

When a worker brings up a concern at a safety meeting, or any other time, you have to do something about it.

Prompt action in dealing with a safety concern may prevent an injury. It may also go a long way toward building goodwill and trust with your employees.

Since you have a great many things to remember and do each week, it is important that you take note of safety concerns as soon as you hear about them. At that point, you must also plan how you are going to follow through until the matter is resolved and the worker is informed of the current

status.

If the matter can be resolved right then and there, do it. Otherwise, make a note. After the meeting, review your notes and figure out what you are going to do. You may need to ask management to pay for some safety equipment. You may need to hire a contractor to carry out a repair. As soon as possible, report back to the person who raised the concern. Let him or her know what you are doing about it, by the next safety meeting.

Press for the needed changes, and continue to report progress until the matter is resolved.

You want your workers to speak up when they observe



"A key word to safety is listening"

a hazard or when they have an idea to improve safety. The best way to encourage them is to take their questions, worries and recommendations seriously. Follow through and be sure to document everything you do.

**An article from: SAFETY SMART MAGAZINE.**

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## F i r e P r e v e n t i o n

### By Steve Hickam, Safety Specialist II

A fire is a devastating and costly event for a business or entity to suffer. Its impact can be one or more of the following:

- ▶ Minor contents and smoke damage.
- ▶ Total destruction or major damage to buildings and/or contents.

- ▶ Temporary or permanent loss of jobs or interruption of business operations.
- ▶ Injury or death to employees.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimated that U.S. public fire departments responded to 1,823,000 fires in 1993, (1 every 17 seconds) which caused an estimated \$10 billion in

property damage. Of these, about 523,000 were structure fires causing an estimated \$8.5 billion in property damage and 1 in 4 of these occurred in non-residential properties causing about \$3.4 billion in property damage. NFPA also estimates that 3,570 civilians died . . . (Cont. page 2)

# HAZARDOUS MATERIAL MANAGEMENT

By Ken Brooks, Safety Coordinator

The management of hazardous materials is an important consideration for any private business or government agency. There are a variety of state and federal regulations that regulate the handling and storage of hazardous materials in California: Cal/OSHA, EPA as well as County Fire and Environmental Health.

Each business and government agency in California that uses, stores or transports hazardous materials in regulated minimum quantities must develop and implement a "Business Emergency Plan" (BEP). This plan requires the identification of the product, quantities properly stored or handled, labeling of containers, MSDS on site and all employees trained of the hazards associated with these products.

Hazardous material enforcement is overseen by the County Environmental

Health Department Hazardous Materials Division. Hazardous material information is given to local fire departments and entered into a data base to be used

by emergency personnel responding to an incident.

Local enforcement of fire and life safety regulations is done by all fire departments within their jurisdiction. The County Safety Office, County Hazmat, as well as OSHA also enforce these regulations. Violations are subject to citations, which can carry high fines to the violator of such regulations.

It is vitally important that Supervisory personnel are aware of hazardous materials regulations when they or their employees work in such environments.

If you have any questions concerning the transportation, storage and use of hazardous materials, contact the County Environmental Health Department Hazardous Materials Division, the County Safety Office or your local fire prevention office.



"Be aware of the hazards you work with"

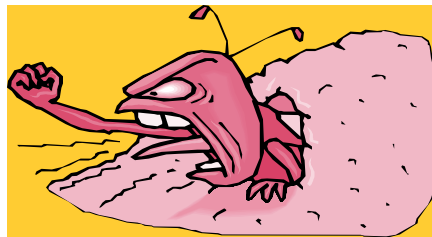
## Fire Ants Becoming a Problem in Southern California

By Art Pereida, Safety Coordinator

A small, reddish-brown ant is becoming a pesky problem in Southern California these days. The red imported fire ant has found a home in the southland and part of the Central Valley, posing a danger both to the general public and outdoor workers.

The ants, which are between 1/16 and 1/4 inch long, build mounds on lawns, gardens, parks, fields, cemeteries and

inside homes, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). They are also attracted to



electrical currents and can be found in electrical boxes, light fixtures and swimming pool pumps.

When their nests are disturbed, fire ants will swarm and attack, leaving painful blisters. Each ant can bite multiple times. About 2% of the population is allergic to the ant venom, which produces symptoms similar to those suffered by people allergic to bee venom.

(Continued: See "Fire Ant" next page)

## FIRE PREVENTION—CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

... (1 every 2.5 hours) and 21, 875 were injured (1 every 24 minutes) in fires during 1999. About 1 in 5 of these deaths and 1 in 10 of these injuries occurred in non-residential property fires.

Businesses and entities need to take the threat of fire seriously and implement a fire prevention program on a daily basis. Remember, if fuel, oxygen and heat don't come together, a fire can't start.

Here are some fire prevention tips, that

if followed, will reduce the risk of a fire:

- ▶ Dispose of combustible waste in approved containers.
- ▶ Keep combustibles away from heat sources.
- ▶ Don't use extension cords as permanent electrical wiring.



- ▶ Damaged, cut or frayed electrical cords need to be repaired or replaced.
- ▶ Don't crimp or staple electrical cords or run under rugs or chair pads.
- ▶ Observe "NO SMOKING" in all County facilities.
- ▶ Turn-off or unplug all non-vital appliances and equipment when idle

Remember, fire prevention is every persons responsibility.

# FLAMMABLE and COMBUSTIBLE HAZARDS

By Joe Salinas, Safety Coordinator

## What is a Flammable Product?

Flammables come in various forms and one of the most common is liquid. These liquids commonly recognized as gasoline, solvents and similar products, give off flammable vapors at room temperature and can readily give off ignitable vapors well below zero degrees, and they can be very volatile.

Flammable gases are more commonly found in industry such as for welding or refrigerants. LPG is used for fuel and more commonly recognized to cook on our gas fired bar-b-Q's at home. These gasses are very dangerous as the vapors could be carried off with the wind, find an ignition source, and could flash back and cause the container to explode.

Some medical gases are also flammable and when they are placed within a medical facility, the utmost safe guarding is employed because of the healthcare environment.

## What is a Combustible Product?

Combustibles will burn but they do not readily ignite as would a flammable. Many have to be heated to raise their temperature so they will emit an ignitable vapor and then this vapor will burn freely. A good example of these are motor oils, lubricants and cooking grease. Solid combustibles such as paper, wood or plastics will also burn, if given the opportunity and once they get going, they will readily burn. Whether they are flammable or combustible, they all produce hazardous products of combustion which can kill or produce long term health effects.

## Proper Handling and Storage of Flammable Products -

1. Do not use or store flammable liquids in the vicinity of any open flame, spark producing device or heat source.
2. Store flammable liquids in their original container or in an approved, self-closing container.
3. Use flammable liquids in well ventilated areas.

4. When transferring flammable liquids to another container, containers should be bonded together to remove the possibility of static electricity.
5. A Fire Department Permit is required for storage and the use of flammable and combustible liquids.
6. "NO SMOKING" signs will be posted and enforced.



Use a Safety Can

7. Storage and work areas will be kept free of all combustible materials and good housekeeping maintained at all times.

8. Oily, dirty rags should be stored in a metal container with a self closing lid.

When in doubt in the use or storage of flammables or combustibles, contact the County Safety Office or your local fire department for assistance.

# Forklift safety essentials

By Art Pereida, Safety Coordinator

When forklift vehicles are used it is very important that the personnel who operate these vehicles comply with the safety requirements required by Cal/OSHA, **with no exception**. Here are some important tips to keep you out of trouble and possibly prevent injuring or killing someone.

## TRAINING

Drivers shall be certified before driving and evaluated every 3 years

**REFRESHER TRAINING** shall be conducted when (A) unsafe operation occurs, (B) accident or near-miss occurs, (C) operators evaluation is below stan-

dard, (D) assigned to drive a different type of forklift and (E) work environment changes which will affect the use of the forklift.

In addition, the rated lifting capacity must be visible to the operator. When lifting a person, a 24" x 24" minimum platform must be used with no hole larger than 1" and slip resistant. Secured guardrails or fall protection will also be required, along with toe board and back guard. Driver will be at the controls at all times.

All forklifts must have working parking brakes, operable horn and overhead canopy when the driver is exposed to

falling objects.

Only trained and authorized drivers may operate forklifts. Stunt driving & horseplay are prohibited. Employees shall not ride on forks and not allowed under forks. Driver will inspect forklift once per shift. Forklift area must be clear prior to moving. Forks will be carried in the lowest position. Forks will be lowered, engine shut off, brakes set or wheels chocked before leaving the forklift unattended or when the driver is out of sight of the forklift or over 25 feet away from it.

Need this training? The County Safety Office is here to assist. Call us.

## "Fire Ants" - continued

If you find a fire ant's nest, don't try to kill the ants or destroy the nests—CDFA has a program to eradicate the pest. Outdoor workers should wear gloves and closed-toe shoes with socks to protect them from bites.

If you are stung, apply a cold compress to reduce swelling, pain and itching. Wash the affected area with soap and water to prevent infection. Use a tropical ointment to alleviate itching and avoid scratching the blisters. If you sus-

## Article: From Cal/OSHA Reporter

pect an allergic reaction, seek medical attention immediately. Symptoms include severe swelling, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea, headache and profuse sweating.

**CDFA Fire Ant Hotline: 1-888-491-1899**

## COUNTY SAFETY OFFICE

3901 Lime Street  
Suite #100  
Riverside 92502

Phone: 909-955-3520

Fax: 909-955-9200

Email: See Listing

<http://intranet.co.riverside.ca.us/safety/>



"FLASH Safety Tip"

**"Be Sharp...Look Sharp... Be Safe"**

*County Safety Office Staff are available to assist you at all times. Our office is in the (909) area code, on MICRO and all have Email.*

### COUNTY SAFETY OFFICER

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## Chair ergonomics

**By Tony Gonzales, Safety Coordinator**

Chairs, chairs, chairs, it seems to be the topic that is discussed most often whenever I do an ergonomic assessment. "Which is the best chair for me?", I am asked. There must be thousands of models to choose from, but which one is best for you? "The chair must fit you", I advise during my assessment.

A large person cannot sit in a small chair and vice-versa. There are those times when an ergonomic chair just cannot be adjusted to fit your stature.

Here are some essentials a chair must have to accommodate you:

1. Height must be adjustable.
2. Adjustable lumbar/back support.

3. The seat pan should be big enough to support your hips and bottom comfortably.

4. Feet should rest on the floor with enough room for a couple of fingers to fit between the cushion and the back part of your knees.



"Adjust the chair so you will be comfortable"

5. The back of the chair should be high enough to rest your shoulder blades on it.

If an adjustable chair is not available due to budget constraints, try the following:

- A. Portable seat cushions.
- B. Portable foot rest.
- C. Portable back supports.
- D. Adjust your PC terminal to accommodate the chair limitations.

Ergonomic assessments are available. Please follow your departments protocol in requesting an ergonomic evaluation of your worksite. Call our office and we'll provide what information you may need for a more comfortable work station.