

news & notes

BEAT THE ODDS

The odds of an average person being a lightning casualty over your lifetime are about 3,000 to 1. Those are pretty good odds. But you can make them even better by following the 30-30 rule.

Here's how:

1. **Watch for dark skies**, threatening clouds, or increasing winds, even if it is not raining.
2. **When you see lightning, count the seconds** until you hear thunder.
3. **If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within 6 miles** of where you are and is dangerous. You are close enough to be struck.
4. **Seek shelter immediately.**
5. **Wait at least 30 minutes** after the last clap of thunder before leaving shelter.
6. **Don't be fooled** by sunshine or blue sky!

Furthermore, be smart by being prepared when you participate in outdoor summer activities:

- Listen to weather forecasts—have a radio with you—and plan ahead for possible shelter in case of a thunderstorm.
- Know that lightning is most likely to occur in hot, humid, summer weather, during the late afternoon or early evening.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Q Services June 2010

Can You Hear Me Now?

How to protect your hearing

There are many causes for hearing loss, including:

- **The aging process**
- **Some ear infections**
- **Some ototoxic medications, such as some antibiotics and aspirin**
- **Hereditary conditions**
- **Loud noise**

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, “more than 30 million Americans are exposed to damaging noise levels every day. Already, 22 million American adults between 20 and 69 years of age have permanently damaged their hearing due to exposure to loud noise.”

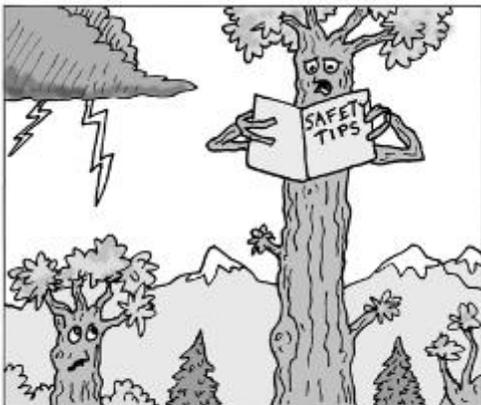
Since hearing loss caused by **loud noise** is 100 percent preventable, let's focus on that.

- **Limit your exposure to noise** that reaches 85 decibels and over. Lawnmowers, snowblowers, motorcycles, firecrackers, and loud music can all reach these levels.
- **Lower the volume** on the TV, radio, and stereo.
- **Keep the volume down** on earbuds and headphones for your Ipad and other entertainment devices.
- **Wear protection**, such as earplugs, canal caps, or ear muffs:
 - When using loud machinery: *or*
 - When exposed to loud noise at concerts or fireworks displays.

Loud noise can also contribute to hearing loss from **the aging process**, which is yet another reason to protect yourself from exposure to excessive noise throughout your life.

Ear infections are common in children but can occur in adults as well. You can help prevent them by washing your hands frequently and by getting flu shots annually.

Be careful when taking **antibiotics and aspirin**. If you notice a loss in your hearing, talk with your doctor immediately about changing your medicine.



“It says: In a lightning storm, don't seek shelter under a tall... Oh crud!”

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GOT A PLAN?

Lifting begins with planning. Before moving any object, examine the load to ensure:

- **The weight is stable** and won't shift.
- **There are no rough spots** or sharp edges—if there are, wear a pair of thick gloves.
- **You can handle it alone**—if you cannot, get help.
- **You'll be able to see over the load** while carrying—if not, use material handling equipment or make a couple of trips.

Also, plan the route you'll take.

- **Map out the easiest route**, not necessarily the shortest.
- **Move objects along the route** to avoid bumping into or tripping over them.
- **Look for safe places to stop and rest**, if necessary.
- **Ensure the object can be unloaded easily** and safely at the other end.

Once you have a plan, you're ready to proceed. The secret to safe lifting is to:

- **Assume the safe lifting position.** Stand close to the object and keep a wide stance. Keep your feet turned out and your heels down. Squat by bending at the hips and knees. Your ears, shoulders, and hips should form a nearly straight line.
- **Prepare to lift.** Pull the load close to your body and grasp the object firmly. Tighten your stomach muscles.
- **Let the legs do the lifting.** Maintain the natural curves of your spine and rise up from the squatting position using your legs to power the lift. Do not bend over at the neck, shoulders, or waist as you lift.



Preventing Overexertion

National Safety Month, Week 3

Surely no one deliberately intends to undergo the pain and harm of overexertion, but it happens just the same. Consider the homeowner determined to shovel a long driveway covered with 2 feet of snow without taking a break, or the vigorous exerciser, at home or in the gym, who insists on performing just a dozen more sit-ups or toe-touches.

Men and women at work may also court the harm of overexertion through competitiveness, cutting corners, hurrying, ignoring aches or fatigue, and unwillingness to seek help when the task is too difficult for one person to handle. In each of these scenarios, “giving it one’s all” may, alas, be just that!

How can that be prevented?

- Know and follow job safety procedures.
- Don't take shortcuts that might save some time but cause overexertion., e.g., moving a huge load by yourself or without material-handling aids. See “**Got a Plan**” sidebar for safe lifting tips.
- Take regularly scheduled breaks, including meal breaks.
- Recognize the signals of overexertion, such as pain and fatigue.

When in doubt, get help; that's not a sign of weakness; it shows you've got smarts.

Prescription Drugs

National Safety Month, Week 1

According to the National Institute on Drugs (NID) *Prescription Drugs Abuse and Addiction* report (<http://www.nida.nih.gov/PDF/RRPrescription.pdf>), the most commonly abused prescription drugs are:

1. Opioids, used mostly to manage pain
2. Central nervous system depressants, used for anxiety and sleep disorders
3. Stimulants, used for sleep disorders and ADHD

Certain over-the-counter (OTC) medications can also have dangerous side effects and be abused. Make sure you know the possible addictive or abusive dangers in OTC meds such as:

- Cough suppressants
- Sleep aids
- Antihistamines

The NID report recommends these tips to avoid becoming addicted:

- Tell your healthcare provider all the prescriptions, OTC medicines, and dietary and herbal supplements you are taking.
- Give your healthcare provider a full description of your condition before you obtain any other medications.
- Follow the prescribed directions.
- Know the potential interactions with other drugs.
- Don't stop or change a dosing regimen without checking with your doctor.
- Don't use another person's prescription.