

**Warm weather gives rise to a host of safety concerns that aren't an issue during fall and winter, such as loose clothing that can be caught in machinery and lightweight shoes that weren't designed for the shop floor.**

Summer is finally here! We will all enjoy the nice warm weather and the pleasures of the outdoors, but summer also brings its own set of safety concerns that do not occur in colder, inclement weather. One of these concerns that deserves your attention is "lack of concentration." This is a very real and very hard to combat hazard that is much more likely to happen in nice weather than when it's not so conducive to outdoor activities. It's very easy for all of us to start thinking about our upcoming vacation, or fishing this evening, or a round of golf after work rather than concentrating on the actual job that we're doing. This lack of concentration can cause some terrible and costly accidents and, of course, can lead to a loss of production. This problem can be one of the most difficult to prevent, simply because we can't control our personnel's thought processes. We must encourage all of our people to think about what they are doing while they are doing it. The question is, how can this be done? I believe that there are many small steps that we, as managers, can take to help combat this potential problem.

One step is to spend more time on the shop floor. Everyone tends to "take care of business" more faithfully when they know that "the boss" may walk around the corner at any moment. Another step is one that has been mentioned in this column previously, and that is signage. Warning signs, motivational signage, and signs encouraging

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proper work practices are all a big contributor toward keeping our people "on track." In these days of computers and fast printers, signage is a very easy thing to add to our environment, and there are very good ideas for signs available on the Internet so that your signs can be changed often with very little monetary investment. The more often the signs are updated, the more effective they will be. Anything that can be done to help our people maintain their concentration will be an asset to our business.

Another potential hazard created by warm weather is our employee's dress. When it's warm we all want to dress to be comfortable, and that usually entails looser clothing that can be caught in running machinery. We must insist that our employees dress to protect themselves. One item that is often

overlooked is footwear. I see a lot more sneakers on shop floor employees in warm weather than proper work shoes. This can be a real hazard and should be discouraged. Sneakers or gym shoes not only do not provide protection from falling objects, they aren't any good on oily surfaces and can cause a bad fall. In my shop, this type of footwear is banned.

In addition, there are the more familiar heat-related hazards that we need to be concerned about such as overheating, and dehydration, and dropping things due to sweaty hands. There are many published methods for dealing with these types of issues.

One more hazard relating to the warm weather that must be addressed involves coolants. Warm weather accelerates the deterioration of both oil- and water-based coolants, both in terms of their effectiveness and also the associated odor. It really pays to keep the coolant tanks cleaned out and to check with your coolant supplier as to what additives you should consider for the warmer weather. Another coolant-related issue is that in warmer weather operators will perspire more, which opens the pores of their hands. This allows coolant to interact with their skin in ways that do not occur in cooler weather, so it's important to educate them about this possibility and have them report any signs of skin irritation.

These are just a few tips to help keep our workers safe and productive during the hot summer months. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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