

In addition to keeping your employees on the job by providing them with a safe work environment, an added bonus might be avoiding a costly, demoralizing, and time-consuming visit from OSHA.


Well, spring has finally sprung. What kind of safety concerns will this spring bring to our workplaces? One that immediately comes to mind is an increase in allergy problems. It seems that allergies have become an ever-increasing concern in recent years. I don't know it to be a fact, but I wonder how much of the increase is due to emissions created in the workplace? We constantly hear about emissions from our cars, trucks, and even our lawnmowers as pollutants to the atmosphere, but what about the emissions from our coolants, lubrications, cleaning chemicals, plating chemicals, and even exhaust from fork trucks? With this in mind, what are you doing to improve the environment within your shop? Are you equipping your employees with the proper protective gear to keep them from being affected by these pollutants? When our employees must remain home due to allergies or a cold, we all lose—they lose wages, and we lose production. It's important to keep our work environment as healthy as possible in order to provide the best protection that we can. There are a number of masks with and without filters available today, and there have been vast improvements made in their comfort in recent years. So if you can't provide adequate ventilation, please provide adequate filtration.

Another concern to be aware of this time of year is "spring fever." How do I

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personally define spring fever? It's a feeling of lethargy concerning the work that I'm supposed to be doing. I don't want to be cooped up in the workplace, I want to get outside and enjoy the weather. This feeling sometimes overwhelms us to the point that we can't concentrate on the work we're doing—which, as we all understand, leads to unsafe practices. What can we do about this, as employers? I have to say that I have no easy answers. I do try to assign everyone some time outside on nice days, even if it involves nothing more than picking up trash in the parking lot and

taking it to the bin. But the main thing I do is try to have a larger presence in the shop. I spend more time with each of my employees, trying to determine where their thoughts are and keeping them interested in what they should be doing. I realize that this puts a burden on the supervisor—as we all have plenty to do already—but the extra time spent is worthwhile if it prevents just one care-less accident.

On another note, I was pleased to read an article by Patrick Van Tyle in *Industrial Machinery Digest* titled "Risky Business." This article points out that ignoring safety regulations can put a company right out of business—one of the very points that I've been trying to make with this column, in fact. And while the article doesn't provide solutions, it does outline the challenges. It's well worth reading, and we should all pay attention to it, because we really do risk losing our business if we ignore safety regulations. One thing I noticed in particular was that one of the companies the writer refers to was being audited by OSHA due to a complaint filed by one of its employees. I feel that only by providing our employees with the best possible workplace safety conditions can we avoid this same type of thing from happening to us. We must take care of our employees—and not only for their good, but for our own as well. 

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