

## **Section 6: REPORTING HAZARDS, HAZARD CONTROL, AND WORKING ALONE**

### **REPORTING HAZARDS**

If there are conditions or practices in your work area that you feel are unsafe, bring them to the attention of your immediate supervisor. Your supervisor is in the best position to assess the situation and will usually have the knowledge and resources to promptly take the appropriate corrective action.

If you are confronted with what you perceive to be a serious, imminent or immediate hazard, or if you still have concerns after bringing it to the attention of your supervisor, contact your Safety and Health Professional. If you don't know who that is, call Safety and Claims Management at 206-477-3350 and you will be directed to the Safety and Health Professional assigned to your department or division. Safety and Health Professionals are Certified Industrial Hygienists and/or Certified Safety Professionals, and are available to respond to perceived hazardous situations, evaluate air quality and noise, specify appropriate personal protective equipment, and consult on safe procedures.

Your Safety Committee is also an appropriate resource to help you resolve safety issues. Every employee has the right to question potentially hazardous situations and to get a satisfactory explanation of what will or will not be done and why. Most Safety Committees have a Safety Suggestion procedure for addressing non-emergency safety and health concerns.

### **HAZARD CONTROL**

Work place hazards should be controlled and/or eliminated according to the following hierarchy:

1. The most desirable method of hazard control is to eliminate the hazard altogether. Substitute a hazardous material or process with a safer material or process whenever feasible. Substitute a quieter tool/machine for a noisy one. Any lingering hazard and/or potential new hazards associated with new process must also be evaluated and controlled.
2. Institute engineering controls to reduce, isolate, or eliminate the hazard. Examples of engineering controls include:
  - Machine guarding
  - Local exhaust ventilation/fume hoods
  - Reactive silencers (mufflers)

- Enclosures for noisy machinery.
3. Limit the duration of exposure to workplace hazards. Administrative controls such as job task rotation can be used to reduce certain exposures to safe levels. As an example, administrative controls are often employed to control an employee's total daily "dose" of noise. However, this approach requires careful monitoring of worker exposure, and is not recommended except as a temporary measure.
  4. Use personal protective equipment. This is a last-resort measure, limited to the following situations:
    - During installation, maintenance, and repair of engineering controls, when an unprotected worker is at risk for injury or illness
    - When it is not feasible or practical to reduce worker exposure to allowable levels using substitution or isolation techniques
    - During emergencies, such as rescue operations
    - Ear muffs or ear plugs are permissible as a long-term method to reduce noise exposure but only as part of a comprehensive hearing conservation program and only when the 8-hour time-weighted average dose is less than 90 dBA.

## **WORKING ALONE**

There are very few occupational health and safety regulations which directly address the issue of employees working alone. Permit-required confined space entry is one example. In those instances where a second person is required by law, as in the case of confined-space entry, it is typically in a back-up, or rescue capacity. Nevertheless, a back-up person or at least a "spotter" should always be present whenever an employee is engaged in a potentially hazardous activity. At a minimum, employees working alone in high crime or remote areas of the County should have some means of communication such as a two-way radio or cell-phone.

Otherwise, working alone issues will be considered and addressed on a case-by-case basis. If you have concerns regarding working alone, bring them to the attention of your supervisor and/or your Safety and Health Professional.