

## **EMPLOYEE SAFETY**

Maintaining the safety and well-being of employees should be a goal of our churches. To achieve this goal, employees must also be committed to practicing safe work habits and maintaining safety awareness. All too often, accidents occur as a result of unsafe working conditions, unsafe equipment, and unsafe actions of employees. Good housekeeping and organization are essential in all work areas. Maintain equipment in safe operating condition. Provide and require personal protective equipment to be worn when appropriate. Assure that employees have received training when recommended.

Employees under the age of 18 should not be allowed to perform dangerous work activity. Additional information and various links concerning youth labor are available at [www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/hazardousjobs.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/hazardousjobs.htm).

Employees should know to report any unsafe actions, conditions, or equipment immediately to administration. A supportive administration is essential for an effective safety program.

Any time an accident or near accident occurs, regardless of whether or not an injury occurred, complete an Accident Investigation report and place it with your files. This report should be completed to determine what caused the event and what can be changed or implemented to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of recurrence. This also can be completed in conjunction with your first report sent to your workers' compensation insurer.

Falls, being struck by or against an object, and lifting are the three most common causes of injury to parish employees.

### **REDUCE YOUR RISK OF FALLS**

Wear appropriate shoes for the work you do and for the walking surfaces you may encounter. This is essential for maintenance personnel, who should wear shoes with slip-resistant soles. If a slippery walking surface cannot be avoided, practice safe walking. Do not hurry, take short, controlled steps, always use handrails when available, and never carry loads which could obstruct your vision. Know how to safely use ladders and scaffolds.

### **STEPS TO REDUCE IMPACT ACCIDENTS**

Being more alert to potential hazards is vital. For staff and administrators, impact injuries occur around storage rooms with overhead supplies. Maintenance employees should know how to operate equipment safely, and the equipment should be in good condition. Appropriate equipment guards should be in place. When working around or with hazardous equipment, employees should wear safety goggles, gloves, or other appropriate protective equipment.

## LIFTING TECHNIQUES

All employees are exposed to potential back injuries regardless of their work duties. Recent studies show back strain injury is by far the most costly of all Workers' Compensation claims. This study indicated approximately 30 percent of all Workers' Compensation claims are from back injuries, but back injuries account for over half of all Workers' Compensation costs in lost work time and medical payments.

Being safety-minded and knowing proper lifting techniques will reduce your risk of injury. Never lift more than what can be done easily. Otherwise, get mechanical help or a co-worker to assist you. Keep your back straight and never twist when lifting or carrying. Back belts with shoulder straps are being used more by workers exposed to back injuries. The belts can help restrict you from lifting improperly and also provide a continued reminder to be safety-minded when lifting.

Be safe, not sorry. Accidents can happen at any time. However, practicing safety awareness and using safety sense can eliminate the majority of injuries. Be alert to hazards and take precautions to protect yourself from being injured.

Catholic Mutual Group can provide safety videos and safety materials to assist you in implementing recommended policies and procedures to improve the safety of all employees.

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Every state has distinct and specific statutes regarding injuries sustained by employees during their scope of employment. As with liability and automobile claims, the individual's well-being should be the first order of business. After necessary medical treatment has been rendered, obtain all relevant facts pertaining to the accident. Do not assess whether an employee's alleged injury is work-related or not. A First Report of Injury needs to be fully completed to allow claim handling. Unnecessary delays in reporting of Workers' Compensation claims can have serious ramifications.

If an employee is injured, first determine if the person needs medical assistance. If so, contact the ambulance or emergency rescue team. Second, complete your state's First Report of Injury Form in as detailed a manner as possible, photocopy, and submit it to Catholic Mutual or other appropriate company.