

# TRANSNEWS

## Safety Tips



Volume 40

## A Ban on Hiring Smokers may not be that Simple

W.F. Clayton offers unsurpassed resources to assist in your commitment to safety and loss control. If there are any questions please contact us.

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For about two decades, smokers have been pushed steadily out of the workplace, as lawmakers and employers have sought to minimize exposure to second-hand smoke.

Employers have confined smokers to designated areas, moved smoking areas outside buildings, and limited smoking breaks. Now, some companies are opting to push smokers out of the workplace altogether.

More companies than ever are announcing they won't hire people who smoke. But is that actually legal — and is it worth it in the end for employers?

### Banning smokers – is it legal?

First, you and your supervisors

should understand that there is no federal law that protects smokers or entitles them to equal protections when it comes to hiring, promotions, etc. That's because the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission doesn't recognize smokers as a protected class.

That being said, there are 29 states, along with the District of Columbia, that do offer protections for smokers.

If your company is in one of those states, you can't refuse to hire people just because they smoke (although you can turn them down for other, legitimate reasons).

Here is the list of states that provide employment protections

to smokers, according to the American Lung Association:

California	New Jersey
Colorado	New Mexico
Connecticut	New York
District of Columbia	North Carolina
Illinois	North Dakota
Indiana	Oklahoma
Kentucky	Oregon
Louisiana	Rhode Island
Maine	South Carolina
Minnesota	South Dakota
Mississippi	Tennessee
Missouri	Virginia
Montana	West Virginia
Nevada	Wisconsin
New Hampshire	Wyoming

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## Transformational Leadership

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For a company to reach functional excellence and continually succeed, it must have a high performance work system in which employees are cared about. There must be trust and commitment, both of which are cultivated when leaders engage the workforce and incorporate employee safety and wellness into the culture.

There are different types of leaders in the workplace, transactional leaders and transformational leaders. Transactional leaders operate

in command-and-control mode. They focus on costs and financial goals, and have a "quid pro quo" relationship with workers. This is the type of leadership that makes a company average.

On the other hand, transformational leaders operate in a collaborative mode. They lead by example, encourage employee development and team building, and genuinely care about the worker wellness. This is the key to productivity and high-performance,

and is the type of leadership that leads to above-average outcomes.

Here are five key characteristics for becoming a transformational leader:

- **Listen.** Seek first to understand. Listen for meaning and feeling, not just facts.
- **Communicate.** Speak in a language that workers understand. Be open to feedback and criticism.

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*Hiring Smokers (Continued from Page 1)***Is it worth it?**

If you're not located in one of those states, you're likely permitted to enact a smoke-free hiring policy and keep people who smoke out of your workplace.

But is a ban on hiring smokers really the right way to go? Opinions differ.

On the one hand, a 2009 study by the *Journal of Tobacco Policy & Research* did find that smokers take more sick days than their non-smoking co-workers.

It also found that even if a smoker is in relatively good health (isn't obese, doesn't have chronic health conditions like diabetes, etc.), there's a good chance he or she will still have higher medical costs than a comparable non-smoker over a three-year period.

But a smoking ban is worthwhile only if smokers quit for good. If the prohibition

causes people to quit until they're hired — and then they take up smoking again as soon as they pass the nicotine test — it's not an effective cost-cutting tactic.

The results point to a need for constant testing to ensure former smokers don't fall back into the habit after they're hired — which can get expensive.

**Cons of a ban on hiring smokers**

Another study from anti-smoking journal *Tobacco Control* found that a tobacco-free hiring policy might not be a good idea. Here's why:

It's a slippery slope. If the decision were based on health-related costs, couldn't a case be made for banning people with weight-related problems, such as high cholesterol or diabetes? And wouldn't that raise discrimination concerns?

Would you be turning away good talent because of a smoking addiction — an

addiction that could be licked with some help?

Sure, when unemployment is high and lots of people are job hunting, you can be choosy. But do you really want to lose an experienced driver or mechanic to a competitor because of smoking? And what about when the employment market turns around, and you find yourself scrambling for good people?

Researchers at *Tobacco Control* instead say employers should push hard to get employees into smoking-cessation programs, especially ones sponsored at work.

Every analysis of such programs shows they're cost-effective in improving absentee rates and time lost because of smoking-related illnesses.

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- **Care.** Visibly demonstrate that you genuinely care about employees' safety and health.
- **Be collegial.** Interact and relate to employees on all levels. Try to make workers feel at ease.
- **Engage.** Convey a sense of worth to workers. Link their needs with the company's needs.

When workers' values align with leaders' values, employees are empowered to engage in the work process. Only when employees are fully engaged in safety can a business be successful.

## Tips for Strengthening Safety Committees

Dedicated and efficient safety committees can lead to increased safety at the workplace. In fact, safety committees are so beneficial, that some U.S. states require them. Here are five ways that can strengthen any safety committee:

1. **Right Size.** Companies with more than 20 employees should have at least four committee members. In a company with several departments or divisions, each should have a representative on the committee. Committees also should have an equal number of employer-selected members and volunteer members.
2. **Executive buy-in.** The committee must have the authority to enact action plans that involve expenditures, as well as direct accountability for responsible parties. Having at least one member of executive management on the committee is essential. Committee work must be on company time and members must be compensated at their normal pay rate.
3. **Meeting structure.** Committees should meet monthly, although a quarterly meeting may suffice. Meetings should be in person but may involve a conference call if necessary.

Starting meetings in time and following an agenda is critical.

4. **Information management.** It is essential to track all information related to workplace and driver safety. Keep a spreadsheet of known safety issues, including injuries, unsafe situations, equipment maintenance issues related to safety and complaints. Detailed minutes also must be recorded for every meeting and posted where all employees have access to them.
5. **Hazard identification and evaluation.** The committee must conduct a quarterly workplace safety and health inspection in the form of a facility wide walk through. A system must be in place for any employee to easily report the hazard, as well as a formal process for investigating, analyzing and evaluating all reported hazards, incidents and near-incidents.

In addition, by incorporating fun into safety, employees will be more likely to participate. Promoting employee safety via educational programs, brown-bag lunches, guest speakers and participation in safety and health fairs are all fun ways to expand awareness and keep things interesting.



## Safe Driving After Dark

W.F. Clayton, LLC offers unsurpassed resources to assist in your commitment to safety and loss control. If there are any questions please contact us.

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Why is night driving so dangerous? One answer is the darkness itself. According to the National Safety Council, 90 percent of a driver's reaction depends on vision – and vision is limited at night. Depth perception, color recognition and peripheral vision are all compromised after sundown. Older drivers especially have difficulties driving at night.

Stress plays a role in increasing a person's risk of injury. Many people experience different levels of stress throughout the day. Stress can, in many situations be beneficial. At certain levels it makes people pay more attention to what they are doing and makes them more productive. It is when stress becomes too high that it can begin to interfere with the ability to make good and safe decisions.

Another dangerous factor is fatigue. Drowsiness slows reaction times and because the body thinks of night as the time to rest, you may become increasingly groggy while driving at night.

Fortunately, you can take several steps to minimize the risks of driving at night:

- Prepare your vehicle for night driving. Clean headlights, tail lights, signal lights

Watch people under a lot of stress. It is often seen in the way their bodies react. Their head comes forward, the jaw tightens, the fists clench and the shoulders draw up. All of these movements happen without people even being aware of them. The problem is that rarely do any of these physical changes help people accomplish a task faster or better, and actually interfere with their efforts. Unfortunately, in

and windows at least once a week.

- Make sure your headlights are properly aimed. Misaimed headlights blind other drivers and reduce your ability to see the road.
- Reduce your speed and increase your following distance. Judging the speed and distance of other vehicles is more

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## Stress

many cases people take their mental stress and translate it into a physical problem. Many of the headaches, neckaches and backaches experienced are aggravated by "stress reactions."

The first step in doing something about stress reactions is to recognize that they exist. The next step is to realize that they do nothing to help, and in

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**After Dark (Continued from Page 1)**

difficult at night that during the day.

- Don't overdrive your headlights. You should be able to stop and park in the illuminated area.
- When following another vehicle, keep your low beam headlights on so you don't blind drivers ahead of you.
- If an oncoming vehicle doesn't lower its beams from

high to low, avoid glare by watching the right edge of the road and using it as your guide.

- Don't ever drink and drive. Alcohol impairs your driving ability and also acts as a depressant that may lead to fatigue.
- Avoid smoking while driving. Smoke's nicotine and carbon monoxide hamper night vision.

- If you're too tired to drive and farther, stop and rest awhile.
- Observe nighttime driving rules as soon as the sun goes down. Early evening can be one of the most difficult times to drive.

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fact, hinder or interfere with people's efforts.

**Dealing Effectively with Stress****Take Two**

When people are feeling tense, they should take two seconds to stop and take a breath. The need to re-evaluate what they are doing and gather their thoughts. They may notice something that they need to do, or not do, that can make the activity either safe or unsafe. While it seems like this takes time, remember that people are significantly more likely to make mistakes when they are tense and hurrying.

**Stretch**

It is hard to stretch and remain tense at the same time. Unfortunately the last thing people think about when they are tense is stretching. That is why it is so important for people to get into the habit of stretching and changing postures frequently during the day; so they don't have to consciously think about doing it when they are under pressure.

## Drive Cautiously on Wet Roads



Rainy weather can pose a serious hazard to commercial motor vehicle drivers. According to a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration report, rainfall and wet pavement are the two most common adverse weather conditions affecting CMV drivers, accounting for 60 percent of all weather-related fatalities.

When pavement is wet, tires may lose contact with the road and prevent the vehicle from braking or steering properly, possibly resulting in a collision. This situation, known as hydroplaning, is worse on wet leaves or during the first 10 minutes of rainfall when the water mixes with pavement oils, creating a slippery roadway.

In wet conditions, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends decreasing the CMV's speed by half and doubling the following distance. Drivers should keep the reduced speed for 30 minutes or longer after rain stops to ensure the pavement has had time to dry.

NHTSA recommends taking the following actions if your vehicle begins to hydroplane:

- Do not use the brakes to slow down – release the accelerator to naturally slow down and allow the wheels to turn freely.
- With an automatic transmission, down-shift one gear to slow down.
- With standard transmission, shift to neutral or depress the clutch to allow the wheels to turn freely and maneuver out of a skid.



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## 10 Tips for Safe Lifting

1. It's always safe for you to test every load before you lift by pushing the object lightly with your hands or feet to see how easily it moves. This exercise will provide you information on the weight of the load. If it's too heavy for you, do not try to lift it; seek someone's help.
2. Do not judge a load by its size because even small loads might be pretty heavy to lift. If you feel any kind of muscle pain or irritation on the way, set down the object.
3. Use proper gear that will support you well for every lift. Wear shoes with good traction and solid gripping gloves, which will help you to hold the object for a longer period of time.
4. Avoid standing too far from the load, as it might not provide you the needed grip to hold the object properly and cause added strain during the lift; always stand close to the object. Align yourself properly over the load with your feet and shoulders wide apart. This will give you the balance needed to hold the load while lifting it.
5. The best technique to lift heavier loads is to keep your back straight, bend your

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## Risk Factors

Risk factors are those things that increase an individual likelihood of experiencing an injury. The primary factors associated with experiencing a back disorder include: **Posture, Force, Repetition, and Smoking.**

### Posture/Position

The positions in which the body is used increase or decrease the physical demands of the task. People choose postures based on habit, physical

limitations or because of the way the job or activity is designed. Nearly all postures are okay for a limited amount of time. It is when people stay in these postures for extended periods of time that problems begin to develop. People can minimize the demands on their back simply by changing posture periodically during the day.

### Force

Forces on the back are

affected by posture. A weightlifter keeps the load within his center of gravity and maintains perfect posture when lifting. If he bends forward or backward the weight shifts and he can no longer support it. The weight has changed because of the change in posture. There are always forces acting on the body. They can be minimized by maintaining better postures, particularly during demanding activities.

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**Safe Lifting (Continued from Page 1)**

- knees to the floor, grabbing the load and lifting with your legs. For heavier loads, try lifting with your full breath, and tighten your abdominal muscle too for added support.
6. Make sure you lift with a slow, steady force. This will help you avoid muscle strains from having to counter an unbalanced load.
  7. Make use of the handles applied to the object or box as

this will provide an accurate grip and will further moderate the weight. Do not bend yourself or twist the body in any ways. This will certainly cut off your momentum and cause muscle strain.

8. Always identify the path on which you will be going with the load and clear all obstacles from your intended path. Take smooth and small strides with much heavier loads to avoid muscle strain

from overcompensating for shifting loads.

9. Try to avoid taking loads over slippery or uneven surfaces.
10. Consider taking your loads in smaller intervals instead of carrying multiple items at the same time.

**Risk (Continued from Page 1)**
**Repetition**

Repetition refers to the number of times an activity is performed. Human beings have limitations and body parts wear out. Athletes often experience this related to the activities they perform. Many athletes minimize this risk through cross-training. They perform different training activities to spread the demands to different body parts. In a work setting, this means looking at different ways a job can be performed. If a job is repetitious, it is important to work in the best postures that the job allows and to compensate by performing brief stretches.

**Smoking**

Studies have demonstrated that smoking (nicotine) has a negative impact on the health of the back. It has been demonstrated that smokers take longer to recover from back disorders than non-smokers. It is important to try and cut down when recovering from a back disorder or to stop all together.

## Tips for Proper Workplace Safety

A workplace is only as safe as you make it. One must ensure proper workplace safety because ultimately you are responsible for the safety of personnel. Even a home workshop requires that you take care of safety measures. Here are a few ground rules.

Keep the workplace as clean as you possibly can. Of course, a workplace is used for a number of uses and it can easily get cluttered. Make it a habit to organize on a daily basis. Even just putting tools and equipment away in their proper places is a great start.

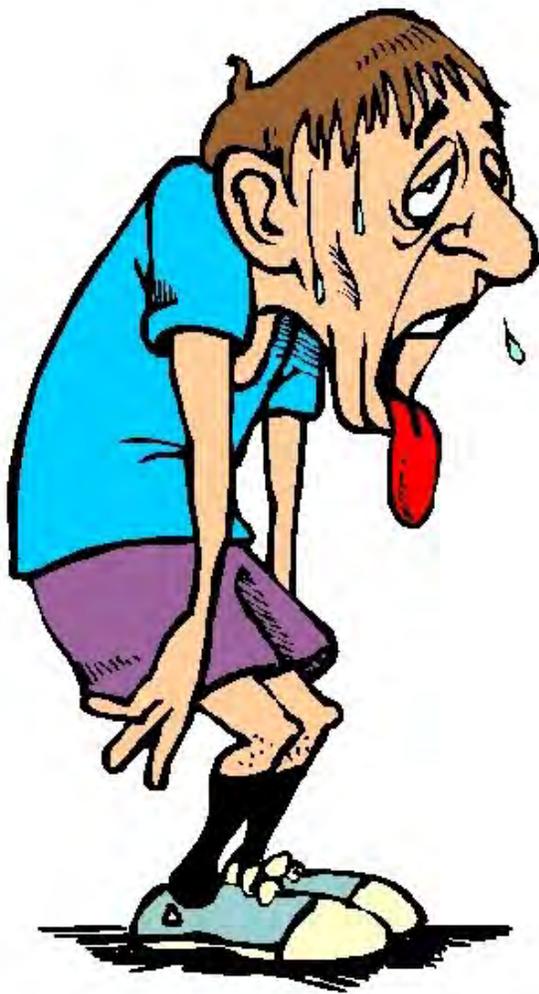
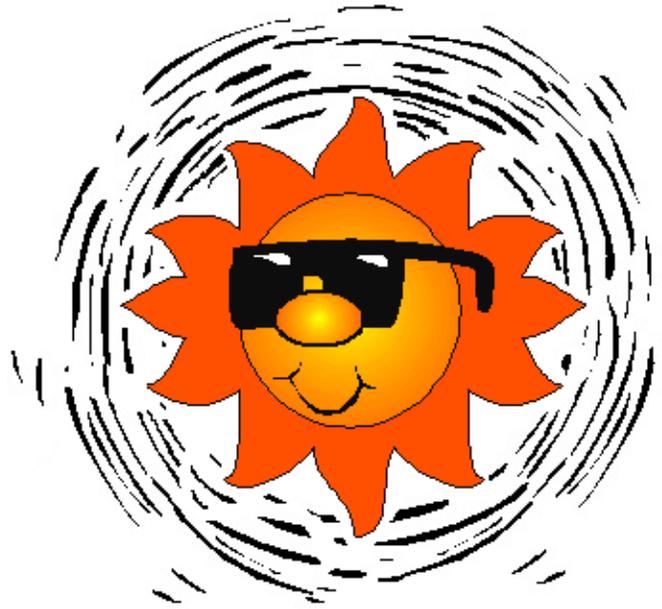
Next, remember to keep all combustible items away from spark-producing activities. All flammable items must be kept away from welding and torching areas. Sparks from a grinder can also cause damage, so keep flammable and combustible materials away from this equipment as well. All flammable and combustible materials should be kept in a fire cabinet or in a designated storage area.

Remember to wear safety goggles and face shield when grinding or using cutting tools. Never put off this safety essential that can prevent you from serious injury. Wearing them can help prevent you from having to go to the emergency room.

Ensure the usefulness of your tools in that they are up to the mark and ready for use. Be sure to inspect all of your tools for defects and have any damaged tools replaced as soon as possible. It can be quite frustrating to find out that a tool is not working when you need it to work.

Always stay focused on the job with a great deal of concentration to ensure things don't go wrong. Be sure to follow established company policies and procedures and take all safety precautions. You must also keep all precautions in mind when you undertake a job with inherent serious risks involved.

**The hotter  
it gets on  
the outside,**



**The more  
water  
you need  
on the  
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