

SAFETY MATTERS

MAY/JUNE 2024

THE 2024 ANNUAL RLI SAFETY MEETING

Experts discussed drug and alcohol awareness, heat illness, pre-task planning and dangers of silica

The 2024 RLI Annual Safety Meeting may have moved the day and date of the yearly training, but the message remains the same: Never take your eye off the ball when it comes to safety, President **Jeff Schaller** told associates.

The change in training, held in May instead of February and on a weekday instead of the weekend, was made in response to associate feedback. Held at Penta Career Center, there were four sessions: drug and alcohol awareness, heat-related illness, silica exposure prevention, and pre-task planning.

Allison Sharer, a drug-free workplace trainer with Safe X Inc., said most people make healthy choices when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. However, as many as 30% of adults drink at levels that put them at risk for problems.

If you drink, she recommends low-risk drinking, which translates roughly into no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink for women and no more than 14 drinks per week for men and seven for women. There are variables such as the weight of the person and the type of alcohol consumed.



Marijuana is more potent than it has ever been, she said. Some marijuana suppliers are not accurate about the amount of THC — the active ingredient in marijuana — in their products.

Sharer cautioned against relying on the new Ohio law that makes recreational use of marijuana legal as a defense for its use. The use of marijuana remains against federal law for both medical and recreational uses. If you test positive, you will be considered non-current, and subject to the substance abuse program guidelines regarding non-current status.

Deb Gacsal, RLG's resident paramedic, said workers are more prone to incidents and injuries when exposure to heat increases. Hydration is critical. All work areas should have an adequate supply of water. Use electrolytes sparingly and not as a substitute for water. Monitor your

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urine as a guide to knowing symptoms of dehydration such as dark urine. Keep an eye on your coworkers for any signs of heat illness and know what to do when you see the onset of a problem.

RLI Safety Director **Mark Hoffman** said by the time silica-related illnesses show, it's too late. Prevention, such as proper PPE and mitigation strategies, is critical to long-term health. Just a speck of respirable crystalline silica puts a worker at risk.

Siddharth Bhandari, an assistant research professor at the University of Colorado-Boulder who specializes in construction safety, said high-quality pre-task planning meetings establish shared expectations, fight complacency, and prime our minds for the task at hand. They must also address ever-changing conditions on the job site.

CONTINUOUS TRAINING KEEPS THE FOCUS ON SAFETY AT ALL RLG COMPANIES



Another round of OSHA 30 training was held for GEM associates, including a session on fire extinguisher usage.

Keeping current on safety training helps keep everyone safe at our job sites.

In the last two months there have been many safety classes at RLG, including the OSHA 30-Hour Safety Awareness class, a rigging and signaling class for masons so they can work at a Fort Wayne, Indiana, project, and a trenching class taught by an expert from Ohio CAT.



RLI held a rigging and signaling class so masons can work with a tower crane to service a mast climbing scaffold.



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THANK YOU FOR WORKING SAFELY

There is plenty of activity at RLG job sites, including, top right, Lucas County Canine Care and Control, where RLI brick masons were building walls; at Lake Elementary School, below right, where a GEM pipefitter was installing hydronic piping; and at NSG in Rossford, below, where GEM electricians were pulling wire for new mechanical condensers as part of the project to modernize a furnace. Thanks to all for working safely.



REPORT FIFIS, IMPROVE SAFETY, WIN GIFT CARDS

Here are the best FIFIs for March and April:

RLI April

(Two FIFIs/\$491 gift card each.)

- While working on a sleeve layout on a substation roof, a GEM associate noticed an unprotected 12-foot by 12-foot open hole in the roof. The associate notified safety and the roofing contractor. The hole was barricaded and protected.

- A GEM associate saw a worker about to change the wheel on a cordless grinder with the battery still in it. The associate stopped the worker and explained that the battery needs to be removed from the grinder before changing the wheel.

GEM April

(Two FIFIs/\$185 gift card each.)

- An associate was preparing to use an angle grinder without putting on a face shield. A GEM associate stopped the work and instructed the worker to put on a face shield.

- An associate was operating a lift without a safety harness. The GEM

associate called the worker down and provided information about safety rules and the dangers of lift operations.

RLI March

(Two FIFIs/\$493 gift card each.)

- Three unsecured nitrogen bottles were freely standing against a wall. An RLI associate moved the cylinders to a column and wrapped them with wire on the top and bottom so they could not tip over.

- Large chunks of broken baffles were about to fall from an elevation of 50 feet. An RLI associate evacuated the area and let a supervisor know about the dangerous condition.

GEM March

(One FIFI/\$360 gift card.)

- While conducting a rigging inspection for an 18,000-pound exchanger, a GEM associate found hard spots within a foot of each other indicating internal damage on the straps. The associate stopped work, red-tagged the boa straps, took them out of service, and ordered new ones.

LOCK-OUT/TAG-OUT KIT

NEO ensures HVAC techs have what they need, when they need it

Having the right safety equipment when you need it makes the job safer and more efficient. Having to double back to the warehouse for the correct lock-out-tag-out (LOTO) equipment could possibly tempt someone to take a safety shortcut in the interest of time.

But Northeast Ohio HVAC techs know that there are no safety shortcuts. So, they compiled a list of tools and equipment needed so LOTO compliance can remain high.

“They were frustrated by not having what they need to get the job done and having to run back to the warehouse,” GEM Service Manager **Dave Cirino** said. “We asked the techs what they needed and gathered a pretty good list.”

Cirino searched and found a LOTO kit from Brady Corporation that would meet the techs’ needs.

Well, almost.

The kits were good but there were individual keys for each lock, meaning techs would have to carry multiple keys. And they were offered in one color only so techs could not immediately tell whose lock it was.

Cirino had the locks re-keyed and found locks in distinct colors for each tech.

“We distributed the kits to the technicians and the results have been good,” he said. “LOTO compliance is better than ever.”



NEO HVAC service technicians came up with their own list of tools and equipment for their LOTO kit.