

The Safety & Health Advisor

Fall 2025



Seeing the Hazards Before They See You

No matter where you work—whether it's a kitchen, a hospital, a service garage, or a warehouse, your environment is always changing. People are moving, equipment is in use, and conditions can shift in seconds. In this constant motion, one skill that stands out is **situational awareness**.



Situational awareness is the ability to notice what's happening around you, understand what those observations mean, and anticipate what could happen next. Being aware of your surroundings is a way to stay ahead of hazards before they have a chance to find you.

Common Workplace Challenges

While every industry has its own unique risks, there are common hazards that appear in nearly all workplaces. Your attention is your best protection.

Slips, trips, and falls: Spilled liquids, debris, tangled cords, and uneven walking surfaces can quickly turn into a twisted ankle or a trip to the doctor's office.

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- **High foot traffic areas:** The danger grows in areas like hallways, entrances, or gathering points—where people may be distracted, carrying items, or moving quickly.
- **Moving equipment:** In different settings, there might be forklifts, carts, wheelchairs, or vehicles. The principle is the same: always know where they are, where they are headed, and whether they have a clear path.
- **Poor visibility and distractions:** Carrying large objects, focusing on a phone, or working in dim lighting can narrow your awareness, making it easier to miss a spill, a step, or a moving vehicle.

Injuries can also result from contact with hot surfaces, sharp edges, moving machinery, power tools, medical instruments, or other specialized equipment. Even if you're not the one operating or working directly with these hazards, staying aware of their presence is an important step in keeping yourself and others safe.

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Building Everyday Awareness

Situational awareness isn't something that can be turned on or off, it's a habit.

It begins with scanning your surroundings regularly, listening to the environment, anticipating movements of others, and being prepared to adjust quickly. See the risk, skip the injury. Plan your movements before you take the beaten path and consider factors such as wet surfaces, workers nearby, or equipment that might impede your step. Take a moment to assess the safest route and keep an eye out for signs. Using communication methods such as eye contact or pointing things out that might pose danger - can help prevent accidents and keep others alert.

The SLAM technique

The SLAM technique breaks down the process of awareness into four steps:

1. **Stop** — Pause what you are doing
2. **Look** — Observe the environment for potential risks or hazards
3. **Assess** — Assess and analyze the hazard
4. **Manage** — Take care of the situation by removing/fixing the hazard or stopping the task

The Bottom Line

Workplaces are changing environments. No matter what the industry, situational awareness is one of the most effective safety tools you can carry with you. Safety starts with awareness and awareness starts with you.

Fall Defensive Driving Reminder

Driving in the fall requires better defensive driving habits to reduce the risk for accidents. Due to less daylight, wet/leaf covered road surfaces, glare/fog, and increased traffic (including school buses), safe driving is especially important to avoid the risk of being in an accident. For drivers in New England, these added hazards combined with roadway construction, flooded roads caused by clogged storm drains, and solar glare can make driving more difficult. Defensive driving is critical to avoid the risk of accidents associated with these hazards.

According to the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 75% of weather-related vehicle crashes occur on wet pavement and 47% happen during rainfall. 5,700 people are killed and more than 544,700 people are injured in crashes on wet pavement annually. Every year, over 3,400 people are killed and over 357,300 people are injured in crashes during rainfall.

Allowing plenty of extra time due to weather or delaying travel all together due to extreme conditions is a key defensive driving rule to avoid accidents associated with speeding/rushing. Here are several important tips to keep you safe when driving in the fall.

Get your Vehicle Ready

AAA suggests checking and replacing wipers that leave streaks or don't clear the glass in a single swipe. Make sure all headlights, brake lights and turn signals are working so other drivers will see you during downpours and low light conditions. Turn on your headlights whenever you drive. This is especially important when driving at dawn or dusk.

<https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/driving-advice/wet-weather-driving-tips/>

Ensuring your windshield and other vehicle side and rear windows are thoroughly cleaned, both inside and out, is very important to reduce the effects of haze/streaks on glass, particularly during fall commuting hours when the sun angle is low.

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Before starting the engine, clean off any leaves on the windshield, top of the car and hood. Using your visor when driving in the direction of the sun rising or setting, along with wearing sunglasses, can also greatly improve driver visibility. However, the visor can reduce your ability to see down the road to spot sudden stopped traffic, so increasing following distance becomes even more important.



Reduce your Speed

Roadway speed limits are created for optimal conditions, not during heavy wind, rain, or when roads are covered with leaves. If you are driving in these conditions, stay below the speed limit, so you have time to react to any unexpected situations. Slippery leaf-covered roads pose an even greater threat on winding roads or during abrupt turns, making it even more important to leave yourself additional stopping distance. The National Highway Safety Administration offers some additional tips when driving on wet leaf covered roadways.

<https://nationalhighwaysafetyadministration.com/e2/four-tips-for-driving-on-wet-leaves>

Increased Traffic (including School Busses)

Due to more drivers on the roadways during commuting hours, it's important to practice defensive driving. Be mindful of the lower speed limits in school zones and the possibility of unexpected bus stops. Always leave plenty of space between your vehicle and school buses.

This gives you enough time to stop safely when the bus activates its red flashing lights and extends its stop sign. Children including pedestrians may cross the road unexpectedly, especially when running to catch the bus. Keep an eye out for children on the sidewalks or roadways near bus stops.



Even defensive drivers can experience skids due to wet and slippery road conditions. If the vehicle begins to skid, it's important to not panic and follow these basic steps:

- Continue to look and steer in the direction in which you want the car to go.
- Avoid aggressive steering and braking maneuvers such as slamming on the brakes, as this can make the skid even worse.
- As your vehicle straightens out, you'll need to adjust your steering again.

Allowing extra stopping time between you and the vehicle in front of you will go a long way to help avoid the need for sudden hard braking and the risk of being in a skid. Remember that defensive driving includes watching the road, observing the car in front of you, and continuously scanning your surroundings by keeping your eyes moving.

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Lithium-Ion Battery Safety

Lithium-Ion batteries are commonplace these days and used for a variety of power applications in equipment such as laptops, electric vehicles (including e-bikes/e-scooters), cordless tools, and many other everyday devices. Recently they have been in the news as a result of serious incidents with devices undergoing thermal runaway (*when battery heat generation becomes self-sustaining releasing energy and even more heat – a perpetual chain reaction*) creating smoke, fire, and extreme heat situations on airplanes, in homes, apartments and to a lesser extent the workplace. This has resulted in extensive damage, particularly when batteries are damaged, improperly used, charged, or stored.

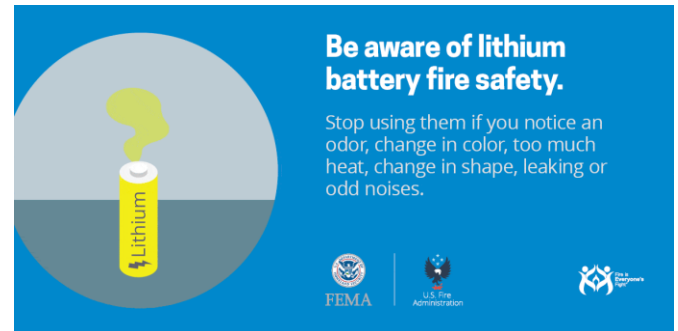
In July, New York City experienced its first lithium-ion battery fire fatality of 2025. A 76-year-old grandmother was trapped in a Queens pizzeria bathroom. An e-bike used for deliveries, which had been left next to the bathroom, burst into flames followed by 3 explosions and thick black smoke with the fire spreading rapidly, trapping the woman. NYC had 6 lithium-ion battery fire fatalities in 2024, and they also had 18 people die in 2023 from e-bike or e-scooter fires, which was a high point for the city.

A lithium-ion battery fire in a store in Onset, MA in January 2025 resulted in a 4-alarm fire. In June 2025, a fire occurred at a homeless shelter in Pittsfield, MA when an e-bike battery being charged inside experienced thermal runaway. In May 2024, a fire broke out inside the Stacyville, Maine fire station caused by multiple lithium-ion batteries being charged next to each other on a

shelf resulting in damage and injury to a firefighter.

As this is becoming an increasing concern NFPA's 2025 fire prevention campaign is focused on prevention of lithium-ion battery fires and related hazards.

The following are some of the risks associated with these battery products. Physical damage, overcharging, or overheating are often contributing causes to these events.



- Thermal Runaway
- Fires/Explosions
- Chemical Exposures
- Thermal Burns

Prevention Strategies

- Do not store or charge e-bikes, e-scooters or similar vehicles (or their batteries) indoors, particularly in occupied dwellings. Businesses might consider providing a covered canopy structure outdoors (with a fire suppression system and/or fire resistive materials) and away from occupied structures or hazardous storage areas to allow for safer storage and charging.

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- Follow manufacturer's instructions for charging, use and disposal.
- Use only certified UL (Underwriters Laboratories) batteries or charging devices (or those items as recommended by the product manufacturers).
- Remove from service (and properly dispose of) any batteries that have been subject to physical damage.

The NFPA has information and resources about lithium-ion battery safety for electronic devices, e-bikes/e-scooters and electric vehicles at the following webpage:

<https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/home-fire-safety/lithium-ion-batteries>

Workplace Fire Prevention

October is Fire Prevention Month. This year's NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) theme is **"Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home."** The campaign highlights the importance of buying, charging, and recycling lithium-ion batteries safely. As lithium-ion batteries may be used in the workplace for a variety of applications this information is also important for businesses. This 90-second YouTube video describes uses and potential risks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lpCIUjVFMc>

October is also a good time for organizations to review their fire safety procedures, including evacuation plans. The review should begin with your current fire prevention practices. Many practices can be applied to the home environment as well.

Organizations with a Safety or Joint Loss Management committee may want those individuals to facilitate an employee education or awareness campaign on this topic or participate in facility safety inspections to include fire prevention and fire response.

Each work environment needs to be evaluated for potential fire risks. Those risks will vary depending on whether you are a manufacturer, warehouse, healthcare facility, auto dealer, restaurant, office or construction site. Understanding the setting can help with identification of risks and the implementation of fire prevention measures to address them.

Some common fire hazards in the workplace may include:

- Cooking areas (i.e., kitchens, kitchenettes)
- Smoking materials
- Open flames (i.e., gas stove tops/candles/incense)
- Electrical hazards (i.e., wiring/overloaded electrical outlets, damaged extension cords, appliances and equipment)
- Accumulation of combustible materials (i.e., papers, boxes, oily rags)
- Improper handling and storage of combustible/flammable liquids or gases
- Space Heaters – [NFPA space heater safety sheet](#)
- Hot work hazards (i.e., cutting, welding) – *May also require a permit and trained fire watch*

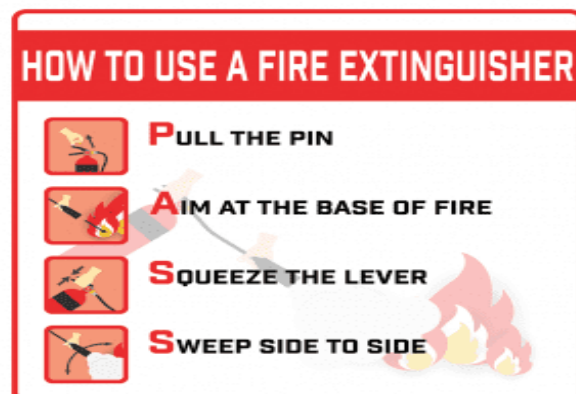
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OSHA Standard 1910.39 – Fire Prevention Plans: While only required for employers in specific circumstances, may be a good resource for employers to review during workplace evaluation. The recommended items include the following:

- List all major fire hazards, proper handling and storage procedures for hazardous materials, potential ignition sources and their control, and the type of fire protection equipment necessary to control each major hazard;
- Procedures to control accumulations of flammable and combustible waste materials;
- Procedures for regular maintenance of safeguards installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent the accidental ignition of combustible materials;
- The name or job title of employees' responsible for maintaining equipment to prevent or control sources of ignition or fires; and those responsible for the control of fuel source hazards.

*Note: Portable fire extinguishers should only be used by those that are properly trained and authorized to do so, and only for small, incipient (initial) stage fires. Regardless, the fire department should be contacted for response anytime a fire suppression system has been activated, and/or a portable extinguisher has been utilized.



OSHA provides a safety and health topics webpage about fire safety at:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/firesafety/>

The NFPA also provides some free resource material (including educational tips) at:

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education>

OSHA renews National Emphasis Program to address Amputations in Manufacturing

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued its 2025 update to the National Emphasis Program on Amputations in Manufacturing Industries (Amputations NEP), renewing the program and introducing several notable changes for employers. The directive aims to refine enforcement criteria and focuses on higher-risk workplaces.

The directive, effective June 27, 2025, and set to remain in effect for five years, continues OSHA's mission to "identify and reduce or eliminate amputation hazards" in manufacturing and industrial settings. It emphasizes the dangers posed by inadequately guarded or poorly maintained machinery.

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Notable changes include:

- Establishments that had an Amputations NEP inspection within the previous 24 months, with no reported amputations during that period, may now be deleted from the programmed inspection list.
- Unprogrammed inspections, such as those triggered by complaints or referrals, can only be expanded under this NEP if the establishment's North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code is listed in the updated Appendix B of the Amputations NEP.
- A significant exclusion is for establishments with 10 or fewer employees whose primary NAICS code appears on the see "[Low-Hazard Industry Table](#)" of the Appropriations Act Directive.

The methodology for targeting industries has also been overhauled, which can be found in Appendix A of the Amputations NEP. Appendix B contains a list of all 96 NAICS codes covered. Some of the noteworthy NAICS codes added that were **not** included in the 2019 NEP include *332618: Other fabricated wire product and manufacturing, 332813: Electroplating, plating, polishing, anodizing, and coloring*, among others.

An OSHA news release can be found at <https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/osha-national-news-release/20250626>. The OSHA Amputations NEP directive can be found at <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/enforcement/directives/CPL-03-00-027.pdf>

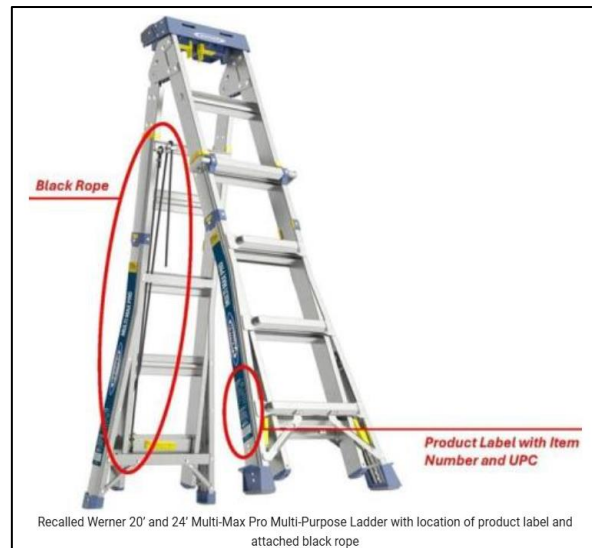
Source:

[OSHA's 2025 Amputations NEP: Key Changes Manufacturers Should Know](#) (Jackson Lewis, July 16, 2025)

Safety Alert: Werner Recalls 20' and 24' Multi-Max Pro Multi-Purpose Ladders

On August 14, 2025, Werner Co., in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), announced a nationwide recall of its 20-foot and 24-foot Multi-Max Pro multi-purpose ladders that were sold between **November 2021 and February 2024**, due to a fall hazard.

The company recalled about **122,000 Multi-Max Pro ladders** (20' model ALMP-20IAA and 24' model ALMP-24IAA) after reports of falls and injuries. The ladders' locking mechanisms can fail, posing a collapse risk. If you own one, stop using it immediately and visit [wernerco.com/recalls](https://www.wernerco.com/recalls) for a full refund.



OSHA's Updated Guidance – Penalty Procedures

On July 14, 2025, OSHA announced that they have updated guidance on penalty and debt collection procedures in the OSHA [Field Operations Manual](#) (FOM).

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The key guidance changes include:

1. Reductions in penalties for small employers;
2. Expand the definition of small employers that receive that reduction;
3. Expand the Agency's use of penalty reductions for immediate abatement of a hazard during (or soon after an inspection); and
4. Provide penalty reductions for employers without a history or recent history of OSHA enforcement.

A few other notes on these changes:

- The OSHA FOM will extend the small business 70% penalty reduction component to 25 or fewer employees, and they have removed language that precludes the penalty reduction for more serious citations.
- The OSHA FOM has expanded the time for a quick fix (or immediate abatement) of a hazard from during the inspection to up to 15 days if the fix requires more time to purchase materials or fabricate a part.
- The OSHA FOM will now recognize a site that has not had an OSHA inspection in prior five years before in consideration of penalty reduction.

	<u>2025 Penalties</u>	<u>2024 Penalties</u>
Other than Serious Violations:	\$16,550	\$16,131
Serious Violations:	\$16,550	\$16,131
Repeat Violations:	\$165,514	\$161,323
Willful Violations:	\$165,514	\$161,323
Failure to Abate (Per Day):	\$16,550	\$16,131

Source:

[OSHA Updates Penalty Structure and Capitol Hill Puts Spotlight on Heat, VPP](#) (Heather MacDougall, Esq. and CSP)

If you need assistance in evaluating your ergonomics or safety and health program, please contact Neal Freedman, John Cotnam, Mark Hickox or Colin Trombley from Atlantic Charter's Safety and Health Department at (617) 488-6500.