



Spring Ahead

Spring is the season when cranes and earth movers suddenly dot the landscape like so many tulips and cherry blossoms. While a full workload is good for the bottom line, longer hours coupled with unpredictable conditions can lead to an increased risk of accidents on jobsites.

Spring PPE: Springtime can be wet, muddy, and windy, making slips and falls more likely. If you can't pause the job for bad weather, make sure workers wear waterproof boots with good traction. A hi-vis raincoat is also a good idea, especially in areas with vehicle traffic, as are gloves with a slip-proof grip. If workers are wearing a hood because it's raining, remind them to turn their heads when they need peripheral vision. Anti-fog spray for safety glasses can help keep their field of vision clear.

Mud safety: Workers should wipe mud from their boots before mounting equipment. If the steps or rungs are muddy, they should wipe them, too. In muddy conditions, everyone should slow it down, even if it means getting less work done.

Excavator safety: Spring is earthmoving season. Remind operators to check the ground for stability before moving across it, since soft ground can cause an excavator to tip or even roll over. Also, prod them to wear seat belts. Refresh your whole crew on how to avoid back overs. Non-operators should stay visible, alert and out of the way.

Fall protection equipment: Spring winds and rains also making working at height more dangerous. Go over the key points of your fall protection policy as far as wearing fall protection PPE goes. Demonstrate how to properly fit a body harness and do a partner check (since some parts of the harness are not visible to the wearer). Go over safe anchor points for personal fall arrest systems.

Scaffold safety: OSHA has scaffold rules in place for good reason, but judging by citations, contractors often ignore them. Here's one for the whole crew to remember: Anyone working 10 feet or higher above a lower level on a scaffold must generally be protected from falls by either a personal fall arrest system or guard rails, and workers using single-point and two-point adjustable suspended scaffolding must use both. Here's another: Employees are not permitted to work on scaffolds in bad weather or high winds unless a competent person has determined that it is safe to do so.

Lightning safety: Spring and summer bring thunderstorms and lightning. (Very, very frightening, to quote the Queen song.) Employees who work outdoors in open spaces either on or near tall objects or conductive materials (think cranes and steel framework,



for example) are vulnerable to lightning strikes. Remind workers of your protocol for lightning; you should have one as part of your emergency action plan. According to a lightning safety fact sheet from OSHA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, workers should immediately move to a safe place if they hear thunder, even if the thunder is distant.

Trench safety: OSHA requires that trenches be inspected daily and as conditions change by a competent person prior to worker entry. Melting snow, flooding and spring rains could certainly change the conditions. Remind workers not to enter a trench until it's been inspected.

SAFETY REMINDER

The day after we "spring forward" and "fall back" both see an increase in accidents.