

## news & notes

### ARE YOU DEPRESSED?

Use this list of symptoms from the National Institute of Mental Health ([www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov)).

Do you experience:

- Ongoing sad, anxious, or empty feelings?
- Feelings of hopelessness?
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness?
- Irritability or restlessness?
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that were once enjoyable, including sex?
- Constant tiredness?
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions?
- Difficulty going to sleep or staying asleep (insomnia)?
- Sleeping all the time?
- Overeating or loss of appetite?
- Thoughts of suicide or making suicide attempts?
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not go away?

If you experience these symptoms for more than two weeks, don't hesitate to get help.



"Hi, I'm the mental health counselor.  
Which one of you is Grumpy?"

# EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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Provided by Hierl Insurance, Inc

## Depression in the Workplace

*It's common, costly—and treatable*

According to a recent report by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMSHA - [www.oas.samhsa.gov/](http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/)), almost 15 percent of adults over the age of 18 (31 million) have experienced a major depression episode (MDE) in their lives. In addition, the two age groups that had the highest rate of MDEs in the past year (more than 10 percent each) were those aged 18 to 25 and 35 to 49—in other words, people in the prime of their working lives.

SAMSHA says that depression is one of the leading causes of disability. As such, it's estimated that depression costs around \$12 billion in lost workdays each year with another \$11 billion lost because of decreased productivity from depressive symptoms.

The good news is that depression is also highly treatable—more than 80 percent can successfully overcome clinical depression—as long as sufferers seek treatment. So if you think you (or a co-worker) may be depressed (See the Are You Depressed? sidebar for symptoms), take these steps:

- **Seek treatment**—and encourage others to do so. Some people are reluctant to speak up because they worry how such an admission will affect their career or that their insurance won't cover treatment. But the earlier people seek help the more quickly they can recover and resume normal life. Your employer may have an employee assistance program (EAP) that can help. Write your EAP officer's name and phone here:

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- **Speak with your doctor** to get a complete diagnostic evaluation including onset, frequency, and severity of symptoms; family history; other medications you're taking and possible side effects; and other relevant information.
- **Follow the prescribed treatment**, which may include antidepressant medications, psychotherapy, or alternative remedies.

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### STAND UP FOR LONG LIFE

A new study from the American Cancer Society finds it's not just how much physical activity you get, but how much time you spend sitting that can affect your risk of death. Researchers report time spent sitting was associated with total mortality, regardless of physical activity level. The study appears in the online edition of the American Journal of Epidemiology.

While several studies support a link between sitting and obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other factors, few have looked at time spent sitting in relation to total mortality.

When combined with a lack of physical activity, the link was even stronger. Women and men who sat more and were less physically active were 94 percent and 48 percent more likely, respectively, to die compared with those who sat the least and were the most active.

### DON'T CALL AND DRIVE

A recent Harris Poll reports that most adults still think it's OK to use cell phones while driving because they believe their driving skills are better than average. The poll found that three out of five (60%) drivers with cell phones use them while driving even though almost all adults (91%) know it is unsafe or against local or state law to do so.

In addition, more than one in five (22%) drivers with cell phones send or read text messages while driving. However, the percentage of drivers with cell phones who use them while driving has fallen over the last two years, from 72% to 60%. Drivers who text while driving has fallen from 27% to 22%.



# Substance Abuse at Work

*September is National Recovery Month*

Consider these statistics:

- Alcohol use can be linked to over 40 percent of workplace fatalities and 47 percent of workplace injuries.
- Drug-using employees are 3.6 times as likely to be involved in a workplace accident.
- 70 percent of drug users work full time and more work part time.

Substance abuse is dangerous because it impairs your ability to operate machinery and vehicles. And workplace injuries related to substance abuse don't only happen to the abuser; in 80 percent of serious accidents caused by substance abuse, the injured party is not the abuser.

Watch for these signs of substance abuse—in yourself and co-workers:

- Inconsistent quality of work
- Work pace is slower or sporadic
- Increased absenteeism and tardiness
- Extended breaks.

If you see these signs, get help. Remember that employee assistance programs are confidential, so your employer will not necessarily know if you get drug/alcohol assistance.

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## (Don't) Feel the Burn

*Know how to prevent workplace burns*

Learn to identify burn hazards for your skin and eyes. They include:

- Hot liquids (for example, water or grease) or steam
- Open flames (often involving a fire)
- Hot surfaces
- Contact with electricity
- Contact with corrosive chemicals

Follow these safety precautions to avoid burns:

- **Identify burn hazards** related to each task or work area.
- **Keep alert** while working.
- **Avoid reaching over or across hot surfaces** or substances.
- **Wear assigned personal protective equipment** to prevent exposure to chemicals and hot substances and surfaces.
- **Follow work rules** carefully.
- **Read the material data safety sheets (MSDSs)** for chemicals to determine burn hazards and precautions.
- **Be careful around electrical equipment.**
- **Remember that steam can burn** as well as hot liquids.