First Aid – By the Numbers



FIRST AID

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year, thousands of workers are injured or killed due to insufficient safety processes, with the construction sector, in particular, reporting high levels of injuries and fatalities annually. There were 2.9 million nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses reported by private industry employers in 2016.

Due to the nature of work, the risks contractors are almost endless; amputations, broken bones, fractures, burns, risk of electrocution, cuts, lacerations and exposure to dangerous machinery.

The importance of first aid knowledge is backed up by research from St.John's Ambulance, in the UK, which suggests that up to 150,000 people a year could be given a chance of life if more people knew first aid. The service also says that 900 people a year choke to death, 2,500 asphyxiate, and 29,000 people die from heart attacks. About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year – that's 1 in every 4 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many of these deaths were preventable through knowledge of first aid.

The construction industry has one of the highest fatality and injury rates of any industry, with fatality rates for 2015 at the highest level since 2008, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The construction fatality rate for private construction currently stands at 9.5% per 100,000 workers. Therefore, the necessity for an effective first aid program is of vital importance to ensure contractor safety.

KEEP IN MIND

PREVENTION – CREATING A FIRST AID PROGRAM

OSHA has laid out the best practices for designing such a program.

Training

The training program should include both instructions and discussions surrounding the following points.

- Have a list of emergency telephone numbers on hand that can be accessible to all contract workers.
- Understand how to administer first-aid care.
- Understand the importance of stress, fear, panic and how they “interfere with performance.”
- Use prevention as a way to reduce illnesses or accidents on site.

How to Assess the Scene

Training should also include information on how to act at the scene of an accident or injury. Therefore, you should consider the following.

- Assessing the scene for safety, the number of injuries, and the nature of the event.
- How to prioritize care if you have a number of fatalities or injuries.
- Assessing each victim’s “responsiveness, airway patency (blockage), breathing, circulation, and medical alert tags.”
- Performing overall checks for injuries.

HOW TO RESPOND TO LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES

Your first-aid program, in particular, should include the following information.

- Establishing responsiveness
- Establishing and maintaining an open and clear airway
- Performing CPR and rescue breathing.
- Using AED.
- Treating shock and providing first-aid for shock due to illness or injury.

NON-LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES

When dealing with non-fatal accidents use these OSHA topics when optimizing your training regarding first-aid.

WOUNDS

Give guidance on the assessment and first-aid for wounds including abrasions, cuts, lacerations, punctures.

BURNS

Lay out what should be done to assess the “severity of a burn” and how to “recognize whether a burn is thermal, electrical, or chemical.”

TEMPERATURE EXPOSURE

Provide information on what to do in the event of exposure to cold, including information on frostbite and hypothermia.

Provide points on what to do in the event of exposure to heat, including heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES

Provide information on the following:

- Fractures, Sprains, strains, contusions and cramps.
- Head, neck, back and spinal injuries.
- Appropriate “handling of amputated body parts”.

HOW TO CONDUCT YOUR TRAINING?

A lot of first aid training can be done off site using an online contractor management system. Orientations can be adapted to suit each location and worker type. In terms of first-aid training, you can create site-specific orientation programs that emphasize the importance of first-aid safety training and ensure ultimate contractor safety. A blended approach to first-aid contractor training may be most effective in terms of ensuring contractor safety. This means conducting both on-site and online training to optimize information retention among learners.