

Bike-to-work day

Friday May 17 is national bike-to-work day. This event promotes biking as an alternative method of commuting that is both environmentally friendly and good exercise. If you choose to bike as part of a commute or for recreation, here are some tips to remain safe:

- Wear a helmet.
- Pay attention to your surroundings, and try to make eye contact with drivers.
- Obey all traffic laws, signs, and signals.
- Ride with traffic on the right side of the road.
- Always use hand signals to indicate you will turn.
- Leave room for right-turning vehicles when stopped at a red light.
- Increase your visibility—wear bright colors in the daytime and light or reflective clothing in the nighttime.
- If you encounter railroad tracks, cross perpendicularly so that your wheel doesn't get caught, or else you may be knocked off the bike.
- If riding with others, ride in a single-file line. In addition, there are sometimes local biking rules and regulations, so be sure to check in the area where you ride regularly, and always practice safety.



SAFETY EDUCATE, ENGAGE & EVOLVE

May 2019

How to protect yourself from falling objects

Each year, there are more than 50,000 “struck by falling object” recordable injuries—that’s 1 injury caused by a dropped object every 10 minutes. Injuries can range from bruises and broken bones to death. These injuries can be caused even by a small, lightweight object dropped from a large height. With safe work practices, however, these injuries are preventable. Everyone at the jobsite has a responsibility for the safety of himself and herself and others, especially if working from a height.

If you are working from a height:

- Have the area below cleared, and post necessary warning signs. Rope off or barricade the area.
- If possible, verbally warn those below that you’re about to begin an overhead job, and make sure they hear you.
- Use toeboards, guardrails, screens, and/or paneling to make sure objects don’t fall off of scaffolding or platforms. You can also use nets or canopies to catch any falling objects.
- Keep materials far enough from an edge, hole, or opening to prevent them from falling to a lower level.
- Stack materials securely to prevent them from sliding, falling, or collapsing.
- Don’t carry tools or materials up a ladder. Use a tool belt, a hand winch line, containers, or buckets lifted by a line.
- If you use a tool belt, make sure pockets, pouches, and slots are the correct size and shape to keep tools from falling out. The belt should be made of a sturdy material and reinforced for the points of tools. If possible, tether the tools to the belt with lanyards. Tools with sharp edges or points should be guarded to prevent injury to you and workers below. Never use a tool belt as a safety belt.
- Make sure any load being lifted is secure and balanced and that no one is under it.
- Practice good housekeeping, and properly store tools and materials that are not in use.
- Don’t carry tools in your pockets because when you bend over or reach, they may fall out.
- Never throw materials or tools.
- Never sweep material off the edge of the working surface.
- Don’t work, or allow others to work, under obviously unsafe conditions.

If you are working on the ground or below:

- Always wear your hard hat and protective footwear.
- Observe restricted areas where overhead work is being performed. Don’t cross the barriers, even to take a shortcut.
- Pay attention to what is going on around you, particularly when cranes and other equipment are being used to hoist materials in the air or you are working near overhead bricklaying, painting, or conveyor belts.
- Don’t walk near roofs after a snowstorm or ice storm.
- Following these rules and using safety equipment may not only prevent accidents but also make any accidents that do occur, despite all precautions, less severe.

Toxic weed killers

Recently, there have been several court cases regarding the weed killer Roundup in which the judge determined that the herbicide was linked to instances of cancer. Although weed killer products that contain the active ingredient glyphosate are still very popular, as more is learned about the health risks, you may consider using substitutes on your garden, lawn, or sidewalk.

The University of Maryland has performed research on several alternatives to glyphosate herbicides. The research found that acetic acid-based herbicides can control some small weeds. You can make a solution at home with household white vinegar or purchase a stronger agricultural-grade acetic acid solution. The research also determined that iron-based herbicides worked for controlling weeds on lawns. Several iron-based products are available from popular brands like Scotts (look for the active ingredient Iron HEDTA).

There are also mechanical methods for weed removal, including physically pulling out the weeds or burning with a special handheld torch.

Fire danger levels

2019 is the 75th birthday of Smokey Bear (aka Smokey the Bear), the character that promotes wildfire prevention education for adults and children alike. Throughout different times of the year, depending on weather and atmospheric conditions, as well as the availability of fuel (i.e., dried or drought-impacted land), there can be elevated risks of fire. The entire United States is divided into fire weather zones, and the National Weather Service (NWS) will issue “red flag warnings” and “fire weather watches” for areas with an elevated risk for fire. In addition, local emergency management services, departments of forestry, or fire departments will also issue the following Forest Fire Danger Levels that indicate varying levels of risk:

- Green (low)—Fuels do not ignite readily from small firebrands, although a more intense heat source such as lightning may start many fires in rotted wood.
- Blue (moderate)—Fires can start from most accidental causes, but with the exception of lightning fires in some areas, the number is generally small.
- Yellow (high)—All fine dead fuels ignite readily, and fires start easily for any reason. Unattended brush and campfires are likely to escape and spread.
- Orange (very high)—Fires start easily, and shortly after ignition, they spread rapidly and increase quickly in intensity.
- Red (extreme)—Fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely.

You should always obey local laws and regulations about burning and campfires. You should be aware of the Forest Fire Danger Level in your area and always act responsibly, as well as with excess caution if there is an elevated Fire Danger Level.

Forest fires: QUIZ

1. Fires are part of maintaining a healthy ecosystem. TRUE or FALSE
2. In 2017, less than half of all wildfires were caused by humans. TRUE or FALSE
3. You can extinguish a campfire with water or by burying it with dirt or sand. TRUE or FALSE

F I V I T E A H N I
 N E D I L T H T D A
 D H G R O U N D O O
 O R T T A F A L L H
 H G E A D E D R V T
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 E V R O O G R V V
 O I O A L E E O E A

FALL
 GROUND
 HEIGHT
 LOAD
 OVERHEAD
 TETHER

Answers. 1. TRUE. Many natural fires are essential to a healthy ecosystem. These fires consume leaf litter and other dead organic matter on the ground and can also thin the tree canopy, allowing sunlight-dependent species that were overtaken by shade-loving species to thrive. The natural cycles of fire (or managed, prescribed burns) can lead to forest or grassland rebirth and help maintain native plant species. **2. FALSE.** In 2017, 88% of wildfires were caused by humans. However, lightning is the most common natural reason fires start. **3. TRUE.** It is your responsibility to *completely* extinguish a campfire before leaving the site. That means dousing all embers with water, not just the red-hot glowing ones, until they are cool and the