

Worksite: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Topic C091: First Aid for Head Injuries

**Introduction:** The human head is comprised of a bony structure known as the skull (or cranium) which is the enclosure for the brain. The head also houses important sensory organs such as the eyes, ears, and nose which are connected directly to the brain. The thick, hard bones of the skull, the scalp tissue, and hair all help protect the brain. Even though we have this natural helmet, the brain is still easily affected by many kinds of injuries. Head injuries kill and disable more people under the age of 50 than any other type of neurological damage, and after gunshot wounds, are the second leading cause of death in men under age 35. Nearly half of the people who suffer a severe head injury die. Of the head injury deaths, half are the result of traffic accidents. Thinking about safety for your head should start on the way to work.

**Damage from a head injury:** A head injury can damage the scalp, skull, or brain in any combination. Minor injuries cause no damage to the brain. Even when there is a split scalp or skull fracture, the brain may not be damaged. However, a harsh blow can severely shake the brain, sometimes causing brain damage, even when there is no sign of harm. A blow to the head can bruise the brain tissue, causing death of some brain cells in the area of injury. When an object actually penetrates the skull, foreign material can cause infection, or blood vessels may break or tear, causing hemorrhage.

**Symptoms and signs of head injury:** If the injury is mild, there may be no symptoms other than a slight headache. In some cases there is concussion (brief unconsciousness), which may cause confusion, dizziness, blurred vision, slurred speech, and poor coordination. Severe head injuries may result in unconsciousness that lasts longer than a few minutes, or coma, which may be fatal. Symptoms such as vomiting, pupils of unequal size, double vision, or deteriorating level of consciousness suggest progressive brain damage

**Immediate care for head injuries:** Quickly assess the situation and if the person is obviously seriously injured, prompt medical attention is imperative. Assign someone to call the local Emergency Medical Services and convey to the dispatcher the severity of the victim's injuries. In the case of severe head trauma, time is of the essence. In some cases, in order to save the injured person's life, an air-lift to a medical facility equipped to handle injuries of this sort may be necessary. In the meantime, check the airway, breathing, and circulation. Stop the bleeding from lacerations if it can be accomplished without further endangering the injured person. Never move the victim if a head or neck injury is suspected, unless imminent danger (such as fire or toxic fumes) is present. Keep the person as warm and comfortable as possible and stay with them until medical help arrives.

### OSHA requirements for medical provisions on a jobsite are as follows:

- Arrangements must be made to provide for prompt medical response in the event of an emergency.
- It is the employer's responsibility to review their workplace addressing all potential emergency situations.
- In workplaces where serious medical emergencies can occur, a prompt response time for Emergency Medical Services is a must.
- If prompt medical attention is not available, then a person trained in first aid must be available in the workplace at all times.
- An appropriate, weatherproof first aid kit must be kept on site and must be checked and restocked weekly.
- Provisions for an ambulance or other transportation must be made in advance.
- Communication and/or other contact methods must be provided.
- Telephone numbers or monitored radio frequencies must be posted where 911 is not available.

**Suggestions for the workplace:** The two primary causes of head injuries on the job are from falling objects or from falls.

- **Always wear** a hard hat in hard hat designated areas and be aware of objects that are falling, moving, or flying.
- **Slipping and tripping** can result in falls that cause potentially serious head injuries.
- **Falling from heights** is a major cause of severe head trauma (as well as other serious injuries). Neglecting to use appropriate fall protection or improper use of ladders or lifts can lead to falls of potentially lethal distances.

**Conclusion:** The head is the nerve center and must be carefully protected. Even with all of the natural protection, traumatic brain injury from blunt force or falling can cause adverse immediate or long term effects, and maybe even death. Use safe work practices, common sense, and good judgment to help avoid head injuries.

**Employee Attendance:** (Names or signatures of personnel who are attending this meeting)

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*These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.*