New Hours-of-Service Regulations for Commercial Drivers

Several years of research are behind the new rules recently issued by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA-US Department of Transportation). Changes from the 2003 regulations will affect short-haul operators and longer-distance drivers who use in-cab sleeper-berths; they do not apply to passenger motor coach operators. Example: short-haul operators (not required to hold a commercial driver’s license) will be allowed to extend their work day twice a week and no longer have to maintain logbooks.


National Preparedness Month

The US Department of Homeland Security, American Red Cross, and a variety of public and private sector organizations are promoting the importance of emergency planning by disseminating emergency preparedness information during September. “An earthquake, hurricane, wildfire or residential house fire—disasters strike anywhere and at any time and can cause chaos for those unprepared,” said a Red Cross representative. Individuals and employers should develop a communication plan and a disaster supplies kit.

For preparedness tips, stories and other information throughout September - www.redcross.org

2005 Iowa Health Fact Book

The newest edition of this publication of the University of Iowa College of Public Health and the Iowa Department of Public Health is now available, with its wealth of Iowa data on disease incidence and mortality, health and social behaviors, health resources, and environmental factors. A limited number of hard copies (paperback) are available for $20 each, or the entire publication can be viewed in pdf format - http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/FACTBOOK/

Quick! What’s the second most common mineral in the earth’s crust?

Answer: Silica—a component of sand, rock, and mineral ores and now classified as a Class I human lung carcinogen. More than a million US workers are exposed to silica, the activities with the highest exposure risk being in foundries and steel mills, abrasive blasting, construction work, mining, and rock drilling. Exposure can lead to silicosis (with an estimated death rate in the US of 200-300 per year), chronic bronchitis, and lung cancer. Workers with silicosis also have a higher risk of tuberculosis. To help catch these diseases as early as possible, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) has developed a model medical surveillance (screening) program for workers exposed to silica. Limiting exposure is the most important way to prevent the negative outcomes. For 20+ years, Dr. William Heitbrink of the University of Iowa Department of Occupational and Environmental Health has conducted field research on controlling silica exposure in a variety of industries. His recent work is the basis of draft recommendations from the Center to Protect Workers’ Rights (CPWR). Dr. Heitbrink is available for on-site consultation – William-Heitbrink@uiowa.edu