MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Positive mental health is described by the World Health Organization as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.” Mental health issues can affect anyone, regardless of age, race, or background. A person’s mental and physical health are symbiotic — that is, they are interdependent, with one affecting the other. People suffering physical ailments and chronic illnesses have a higher risk of depression, and people with depression are more prone to having other health issues.

Most employers realize the importance of providing a safe, hazard-free environment, as well as fostering healthy habits in their employees. Even though Florida’s Civil Rights Act prohibits discriminating based on physical or mental impairments, the stigma of mental illness still exists. Roughly 85% of workers in the U.S. (Continued on page 2)
allow their mental health conditions to go undiagnosed or untreated out of shame or fear of reprisal.

By promoting mental health in the workplace, employers have the opportunity to eliminate this stigma, which will not only improve the overall wellness and satisfaction of employees, but also lower costs and increase productivity for the agency. A study published in Inc. Magazine in 2016 stated that between decreased performance and absenteeism, mental illness and substance abuse cost employers around $225.8 billion each year. And with workplace violence on the rise, there is much more at stake than a loss of productivity.

So how can your workplace help to promote a healthy environment and eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness? Practicing “supportive performance management” can help.

**FACTS & FIGURES**

- **1 in 5** adults experiences a diagnosable mental illness each year.
- **16 million** Americans have at least one major depressive episode each year.
- In the U.S., mental health issues cause an estimated **200 million** lost work days each year — more than physical illness and injuries combined.
- Workers with untreated depression use **2 to 4 times** as many healthcare resources as their peers.

- If an employee is struggling with performance at work, rule out the possibility of a mental health issue before considering disciplinary action. Use non-judgmental language, such as “You’re not your usual self,” rather than “You seem depressed.”
- Communicate clearly, with concern, and without judgment. Example: Instead of saying, “Don’t be late for meetings,” try saying, “I need you to be at meetings at least one minute before they start. How can I help you do that?”
- Listen and understand the employee’s perspective before discussing solutions. Help them to develop their own solutions, which shifts the focus from compliance to commitment.
ACTIVE SHOOTER PREPAREDNESS

AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS AN INDIVIDUAL ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN KILLING OR ATTEMPTING TO KILL PEOPLE IN A CONFINED AND POPULATED AREA, TYPICALLY THROUGH THE USE OF FIREARMS.

IN MOST CASES, ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENTS HAVE NO PATTERN OR METHOD TO THE SELECTION OF VICTIMS.

THE AVERAGE ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENT LASTS LESS THAN TEN MINUTES, OFTEN ENDING BEFORE LAW ENFORCEMENT EVEN HAS TIME TO RESPOND.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF:

+ CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO. You will need to provide the location, number and physical description of shooters, number and types of weapons involved, and number of potential victims at your location.
+ Be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.
+ Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility where you work or visit. Have an escape route and plan in mind.
+ If you can escape, leave your belongings behind, keep your hands visible, and help others escape if possible.
+ If you cannot escape, get into a room and secure the doors. Hide out of sight and behind large items.
+ Silence your cell phone and other sources of sound.
+ ONLY AS A LAST RESORT, if your life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate or disrupt the active shooter. Act with physical aggression. Be loud. Use improvised weapons. Throw items at the shooter.
+ WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES, remain calm and follow instructions. Put down any items in your hands, spread your fingers and keep them visible. Avoid quick movements toward officers. When evacuating, do not stop to ask officers for help or directions.

IN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION REMEMBER...

RUN EXIT
HIDE
FIGHT

HOW TO CREATE A STIGMA FREE WORKPLACE

- Educate employees about the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders.
- Encourage employees to talk about stress, workload, family commitments, and other issues.
- Communicate that mental illnesses are real, common, and treatable.
- Discourage judgmental or hurtful labels, such as "crazy," "loony," or "nuts."
- Help employees transition back to work after they take leave.
- Consult with the Florida State Employee Assistance Program @ www.sofeap.com or 1-844-208-7067.
SEVERE WEATHER
PREPARING YOUR WORKPLACE FOR A DISASTER

Hurricane Irma is fresh on the minds of all Floridians. But with nearly one and a half months still left in the hurricane season, it is important to remain prepared.

Hurricanes, tornadoes, even typical Florida storms can bring damaging rain, hail, and wind. You probably have an emergency plan in place for your home and family, and it is just as important to make preparations at work.

The first step in developing a Comprehensive Plan for the workplace is to assess what risks your workplace is most likely to face (flooding, wind damage, etc.).

Next, take an inventory of records and data that should be backed up and kept offsite, in case of flooding or other damage.

OSHA recommends that an effective Comprehensive Plan contain:

- A list of conditions that will activate the Plan;
- Chain of command — who will perform emergency functions;
- Emergency contact list for essential employees;
- Procedures for evacuation and securing of buildings, including routes, exits, and locations for workers to regroup;
- Methods allowing personnel to be notified of an emergency, such as an alarm system, phone tree, etc.;
- Procedures for protecting documents and equipment from damage (backing up files, covering computers, etc.);
- List of locations of emergency equipment and steps that must be taken when power is out.

Safety managers should discuss with management which personnel are critical in an emergency. These employees will need to be instructed on how to perform their emergency response duties. These may include forwarding phone lines, updating and distributing phone lists, contacting personnel, and posting signs.

Once established, the Comprehensive Plan will need to be clearly communicated to all personnel so that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities during an emergency. Employees should coordinate with other state agencies, as well as outside vendors, with whom they regularly do business to be sure they are made aware of the emergency situation.

For more information about how to prepare for a disaster, visit the following websites:

Florida’s Division of Emergency Management: www.floridadisaster.org

FEMA’s Disaster Planning & Preparation web page: www.fema.gov/plan-prepare-mitigate

CDC Emergency Preparedness & Response / Natural Disasters & Severe Weather web page: www.cdc.gov/disasters

Emergency Management Institute: training.fema.gov/emi

Ready: www.ready.gov

Floods caused by Florida’s heavy rains or storm surge can do catastrophic damage to roads and structures.
# SLIP, TRIP, & FALL PREVENTION

Second only to overexertion, slips, trips, and falls account for more disabling injuries than any other workplace accident. In 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported over 309,000 incidents, resulting in injuries such as bruises, bone fractures and sprains, and even death.

The good news is that, by implementing basic safety rules and being aware of our surroundings, these types of injuries are highly preventable.

## SLIPS

Happen when there is too little friction or traction on the walking surface.

**Commonly caused by:**
- wet or oily spills
- unanchored mats or rugs
- slick, untextured flooring
- Inappropriate footwear

**Prevented by:**
- cleaning up spills immediately
- placing warning signs on wet floors
- installing rubber or abrasive floor mats or replacing worn flooring
- encouraging workers to wear comfortable, rubber-soled shoes

## TRIPS

Happen when your foot collides with an object, causing you to lose balance.

**Commonly caused by:**
- obstructed view or poor lighting
- objects in walkways
- uncovered cables
- uneven walking surfaces
- desk & cabinet drawers being left open

**Prevented by:**
- keeping walkways free of clutter
- tacking down or replacing rugs that do not lay flat
- Keeping drawers closed when not in use
- Maintaining a well-lit workspace

## FALLS

Same as with trips, but from an elevation, such as ladders, roofs, or stairs.

**Commonly caused by:**
- Slippery, cluttered, or unstable walking or working surfaces
- Unprotected edges, floor holes, or wall openings
- Unsafely positioned ladders
- Misused or unused fall protection

**Prevented by:**
- Being aware of your surroundings
- Walking at a pace suitable for the task at hand
- Always use handrails, safety belts, and harnesses
PUTTING SAFETY FIRST

They are the headlines nobody wants to read — a devastating accident causes loss of life and property. An investigation shows the damage was multiplied by inadequate safety regulations and cost-cutting measures.

In June of this year, the Grenfell Tower in West London went up in flames after a man’s refrigerator caught fire, resulting in an estimated 80 deaths. The building had 24 floors and only one staircase. It had no fire alarms, sprinklers, or fire escapes. What it did have was a new façade made of materials so flammable that their use in construction had been banned in the U.S. and many European countries. However, in an effort to cut costs, businesses pushed for the U.K. government to pare back fire safety regulations.

“79 dead and counting …”

“Regulators Put Cost Before Safety”

They were told it was safe”

Stories such as this teach us that you can’t put a price on safety. Cutting corners may help the bottom line, but the costs of an accident can be much higher. Fires and explosions resulted in 148 occupational fatalities in 2013.

Fire prevention in the workplace begins by eliminating hazards.

ELECTRICAL: Make sure outlets are not overloaded, plugs are not loose, and wiring is not faulty or fraying. Keep combustible materials away from electrical equipment. Keep electrical control panels easily accessible so that the power can be shut off quickly.

HOUSEKEEPING: Clutter provides fuel and can prevent access to emergency exits and equipment. Combustible dusts, such as those created by wood, plastic, metal, or even flour, can ignite and explode. Make sure operations that create such dusts are well ventilated and at a safe distance from potential ignition sources.

DESIGNATED SMOKING AREAS: Never smoke in areas where combustible materials such as paper or chemicals are stored, and extinguish and dispose of smoking materials safely.

MAINTENANCE: Be sure machinery and electronics are in good working order to prevent overheating and friction sparks. Keep heat-producing equipment such as servers, boilers, ovens, stoves, and fryers clean, and store flammable materials away from such equipment.

(Continued on page 7)
The next step is to prepare your building and its employees for a fire emergency. OSHA recommends employers develop an Emergency Action Plan. This can range from very simple plans for offices with no hazardous materials or processes, to more complex plans for workplaces where employees fight fires or perform medical or rescue tasks. Each plan developed should be specific to the worksite. Make sure employees receive training so they know what to do in case of fire emergency, and encourage them to point out potential hazards and offer suggestions about the best way to respond.

Here are some basic ways your workplace can prepare for a fire emergency.

**EXITS:** Emergency exits should be marked and well lit. NEVER block fire exits. The evacuation route should be posted near exits. Instruct employees to use stairs rather than elevators during an emergency.

**EQUIPMENT:** Install sprinkler systems, smoke detectors, and fire extinguishers, and have them tested annually. Alarms or other means of alerting workers of an emergency should be provided.

**PREPARATION:** Employees should be instructed on the emergency procedures for their specific agency and jobsite. Review the evacuation routes. Address how to evacuate disabled employees, as well as procedures for those who must stay behind to shut down critical equipment. Make sure employees can be accounted for after they evacuate by designating a safe place to meet. Employers should review the plan with new employees and with all employees should changes be made.

The state of Florida has a Fire Prevention Code (per Chapter 633.202, F.S.), which is enforced by the local fire official within each county, municipality, and special fire district. Each region may also have local amendments specific to your community. If you have a specific question regarding the Florida Fire Prevention Code or how it affects a specific building, contact your local fire official.


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The Florida Drug-Free Workplace Act (112.0455, F.S.) “promotes the goal of drug-free workplaces within government through fair and reasonable drug-testing methods for the protection of public employees and employers.” Employers are encouraged to provide employees who have drug use problems with an opportunity to participate in an employee assistance program or other rehabilitation program. Some of the benefits seen by drug-free workplaces include:

- Reduced absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover
- Reduced discipline problems
- Improved morale, motivation, and productivity
- Reduced workplace accidents, theft, and violence
- Increased quality of goods and services provided by agencies

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**National Drug-Free Work Week**

**Working Drug Free Works!**

October 16-21, 2017
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We look forward to your feedback on how we can better serve you. To submit story ideas, articles, and other suggestions—or to be added to our distribution list, please contact us by clicking on the link below:
State Loss Prevention Program

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