news and notes

Actor illustrates the risks of workplace injuries

US Weekly has been telling its readers for years that stars are “just like us.” An article in The New Yorker reinforces this notion, at least when it comes to the odds of workplace injury when you’re not careful and take unnecessary risks.

The article lists the various injuries TV, movie, and Broadway actor Bobby Cannavale has suffered on the job, including:

- A torn rotator cuff from punching a bed in a 2011 play,
- Six stitches in his head after hitting it on a table and knocking himself unconscious during rehearsals for the same play,
- Another head cut from walking into a metal beam during a performance of, yes, that same play,
- A pulled back muscle after his character on Boardwalk Empire beat someone to death with a shovel, and
- A torn meniscus from jumping off of a table his most recent play, The Hairy Ape.

Cannavale’s litany of injuries is a good reminder that just about every job comes with a risk of injury. So be careful out there!

Cleaning product safety tips

Know the hazards of working with chemicals

You should always use caution when working with common chemical cleaners and other chemical products. Many traditional cleaning products—such as glass cleaner, floor finish, metal polish, toilet bowl cleaner, and disinfectants—contain solvents that can be harmful to the body. These solvents are hazardous and can cause injuries from mild health effects, such as skin and eye irritation, to long-term diseases, such as heart and kidney failure, sterility, or cancer.

What identifies the hazards?

Containers for cleaning products must have a label. Each label is required to have the name of the product; the applicable hazard warnings; and the name, address, and phone number of the manufacturer. If the labels are worn or unreadable, they should be replaced. If a container doesn’t have a label, tell your supervisor. Do not use it.

All cleaning products have safety data sheets (SDSs). SDSs should always be available where the chemicals are being used and stored.

What can you do to use the chemicals safely?

Regardless of whether the chemical container does or doesn’t have a label, do not sniff it to see if you can identify what’s inside—a small sniff of a hazardous chemical can be dangerous and deadly. Here are some additional tips to help you stay safe and healthy when working with these products:

- Use mild cleaners for regular cleaning. Save stronger chemicals for stubborn stains.
- Dilute chemicals with as much water as possible while still getting the job done. Follow the manufacturer’s directions.
- Open windows and doors, if possible, when using chemicals.
- Never mix chemicals unless instructed to do so by the manufacturer, especially ammonia and bleach—this is a lethal combination.
- Close all containers, especially spray bottles, when not in use.
- Pour chemicals (such as toilet bowl cleaner) from a low height to avoid splashing.
- Never smoke around cleaning chemicals.
- Always wear personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, safety glasses, and respirators, when pouring or diluting chemicals.
- Chemicals require proper storage. Never store chemicals near electrical equipment or in heat or direct sunlight. Use a well-ventilated area for storage.

If you have questions or concerns, see the label, the SDS, or your supervisor.
Helping employees beat the heat

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently asked what employers do to keep employees safe in high-heat conditions. The following are some of the responses.

Land of Lincoln Goodwill Industries in Springfield, Illinois, implements a buddy system within shifts so that workers can keep an eye on one another and report to their supervisor if they notice symptoms of heat illness. New and/or transferred employees are gradually acclimated to the environment through frequent breaks during their first 2 weeks on the job and during heat waves. The company also gives workers cooling caps and bandanas, additional breaks, water and sports drinks when the heat is especially high.

Ballard Marine Construction, a contractor serving international clients in the nuclear, hydroelectric, salvage, pipeline, and submarine cable industries, sets up portable shade canopies outside its dive control vans, with misting hoses woven throughout the frames to cover workers with a fine spray of water throughout the day.

Granite Construction provides workers with portable canopy sun shades; evaporative, cooling neck towels; and shades that attach to the back of their hard hats. The company also monitors the Heat Safety app and conducts training sessions on heat exposure.

Image credit: Okea / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

Cleaning product safety quiz

1. Traditional cleaning solvents are not dangerous to you or to your health. True or False
2. You do not need to replace a label if it is worn; others will know what chemical it is by its used looks. True or False
3. _____ should always be available where the chemicals are being stored in your workplace.
   A. Safety data sheets (SDSs)
   B. Water
   C. Fire escape plans
4. Use stronger chemicals for normal cleaning. Do not use mild cleaners because they don’t work. True or False.
5. You should store chemicals in small, closed storage spaces and within direct sunlight. True or False

ANSWERS
1. False. Many traditional cleaning products contain solvents that can cause injuries from mild health effects, such as skin and eye irritation, to long-term diseases, such as heart failure or cancer. 2. False. Don’t use a chemical that doesn’t have a label. If the labels are unreadable, they should be replaced. If a container doesn’t have a label, tell your supervisor. 3. A. You should always look for the SDS near the cleaning product that is being stored. You should know the hazards of each chemical. 4. False. Most mild cleaners can take care of everyday cleaning issues. Only use stronger chemicals when absolutely necessary. 5. False. Only store chemicals in well-ventilated areas and out of direct sunlight.

Handling cardiac emergencies

The American Heart Association (AHA) recently launched a new campaign, AHA Workplace Safety Training Initiative, to promote first-aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and automatic external defibrillator (AED) training. Recent research found that most U.S. employees are not prepared to handle a workplace cardiac emergency because they lack training in CPR and first aid. Half of the employees questioned could not locate an automated external defibrillator at work. According to two online surveys, among more than 1,000 safety managers in industries, one-third said training was offered only after a workplace incident.

According to the findings:

- One-third reported lives were saved at the workplace or home due to workplace first-aid, CPR, and AED training.
- Three-quarters said workplace injuries or medical conditions were treated on the basis of the training.
- More than one-third felt it would be valuable to have training more often than every 2 years (the current requirement).
- Although about 45 percent of younger workers took first-aid, CPR, or AED training, they were less likely to do so than older workers.

According to the AHA, only about 35 percent of employers offer cardiac training. If you need CPR/AED training, talk to your supervisor.