

APARTMENT SAFETY TIPS

Handyman Safety

A safe building can increase worker productivity and lower the cost of business operation. Accidents and illnesses can be reduced, or even eliminated, through informed planning and education.

Often, we are too busy filling vacancies, dealing with problem tenants, repairs and replacements to think about the apartment community's safety.

The Safety and Health Services Department of State Fund has produced these articles to assist you in your loss control efforts. Distribute them to your current resident managers and consider purchasing a binder and saving these valuable monthly tips for future reference and newly hired resident managers.

A handyman or maintenance man is often called on to perform odd jobs in a variety of the trade fields including plumbing, carpentry, roofing, electrical, painting, and concrete work. You need a broad range of work and safety skills to get the job done.

You may do window and roof work, fix roofing leaks, or repair dry rot on roofs and eaves. Choose the correct extension ladder for your work. Inspect the ladder before you use it. Set ladders up on a solid surface and at the correct 4:1 angle ratio. Always face the ladder and hold on with both hands while you go up and down. Make sure the ladder extends three feet beyond the access point and it is tied off to the structure. Bring tools up on a tool belt or by rope. Use tool tethers to prevent dropping them. If you go up onto a roof or other elevated location, watch for skylights, extreme slopes, and other hazards. Consider fall protection if you have to work at a height and close to an unprotected roof or structure edge.

Learn about electrical currents and the requirements and clearances required to work around them. De-energize electric lines and equipment before you work on them. Use a lockout/blockout system to prevent equipment from energizing or starting while you work on it. When working with tools and equipment, watch for electrical sources, boxes, panels, and overhead lines.

Read the material safety data sheets (MSDS) or the manufacturer's package instructions on every chemical you use so you know how to properly mix, apply, and dispose of them. Use the personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the package directions. Inspect your hand and power tools before each use. Make sure they are in proper working order. Keep cutting tools sharp to prevent accidental slips and cuts. Use the proper tool for the job.

Be prepared for a variety of different work environments and hazards. Get training so you can spot building materials and locations that may contain asbestos materials. Use safe and compliant work practices around asbestos. Do not grind, break, pulverize, or sand it unless you are certified to work with asbestos and you are using appropriate containment,

work, and disposal methods. Be familiar with lead paint and control activities such as scraping, sanding, or grinding that might create lead dust. Get certification in order to conduct compliant lead renovation work properly.

You may cover a lot of territory while doing your work, so get familiar with field safety concepts such as safe driving, handling aggressive dogs, snakes, ticks, stinging insects, and poison oak and ivy. Use proper postures and lifting techniques to prevent musculoskeletal disorders.

You will need a variety of clothing and PPE to suit each job you do. Wear lightweight layers with long sleeves and pants. Wear sturdy work boots with a heel and non-slip sole. Wear a high-visibility vest if you will be doing work at night or near a road. Keep a PPE kit stocked with a nuisance dust mask, respirator, safety glasses, earplugs and muffs, a variety of gloves, and a hardhat.

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