The EHS Connection

March 2018

Triangle Shirt Waist Factory Fire

Near closing time on Saturday afternoon, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the top floors of the Asch Building in the Triangle Waist Company. Within minutes, the quiet spring afternoon erupted into madness, a terrifying moment in time, disrupting forever the lives of young workers. By the time the fire was over, 146 of the 500 employees had died. The survivors were left to live and relive those agonizing moments. The victims and their families, the people passing by who witnessed the desperate leaps from ninth floor windows, and the City of New York would never be the same. Survivors recounted the horrors they had to endure, and passers-by and reporters also told stories of pain and terror they had witnessed. The images of death were seared deeply in their mind's eye.

Many of the Triangle factory workers were women, some as young as 14 years old. They were, for the most part, recent Italian and European Jewish immigrants who had come to the United States with their families to seek a better life. Instead, they faced lives of grinding poverty and horrifying working conditions. As recent immigrants struggling with a new language and culture, the working poor were ready victims for the factory owners. For these workers, speaking out could end with the loss of desperately needed jobs, a prospect that forced them to endure personal indignities and severe exploitation. Some turned to labor unions to speak for them; many more struggled alone. The Triangle Factory was a non-union shop, although some of its workers had joined the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

New York City, with its tenements and loft factories, had witnessed a growing concern for issues of health and safety in the early years of the 20th century. Groups such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the Womens' Trade Union League (WTUL) fought for better working conditions and protective legislation. The Triangle Fire tragically illustrated that fire inspections and precautions were woefully inadequate at the time. Workers recounted their helpless efforts to open the ninth floor doors to the Washington Place stairs. They and many others afterwards believed they were deliberately locked-- owners had frequently locked the exit doors in the past, claiming that workers stole materials. For all practical purposes, the ninth floor fire escape in the Asch Building led nowhere, certainly not to safety, and it bent under the weight of the factory workers trying to escape the inferno. Others waited at the windows for the rescue workers only to discover that the firefighters' ladders were several stories too short and the water from the hoses could not reach the top floors. Many chose to jump to their deaths rather than to burn alive.

Hard Hat Requirements

Around construction sites or in some day to day jobs, hard hats are the best way to protect yourself from permanent, life-changing injuries or death. It's important, then, that workers understand the various types of hard hats, how to care for hard hats, and requirements of wearing hard hats on the job.

OSHA regulations mandate specific requirements for head protection in the workplace. As with many OSHA standards, these rules incorporate standards from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). OSHA provides the regulations to follow, and ANSI provides the means to follow those regulations.

OSHA has two standards that govern hard hat requirements:

- 29 CFR 1910.135 governs for general industry workers
- 29 CFR 1926.100 refers to for construction, demolition, and renovation workers

When Do I Need to Replace My Hard Hat?

Hard hats must be replaced if they show signs of damage (dents, cracks, penetration, or fatigue due to rough treatment). It is essential to inspect hard hats for damage and signs of fatigue each time they are used. In addition to visual inspections, another way to test a hard hat is to grasp it in two hands and apply force by squeezing the hat. If you hear creaking or other unusual sounds, it is time to replace the hard hat.

A generally accepted rule is to replace the support strap yearly and to replace the hard hat every five years. Harsh chemicals and extreme temperatures can make a hard hat degrade more quickly. Be sure to check with the manufacturer for guidelines on hard hat replacement and maintenance.

Can I Place Labels on My Hard Hat?

OSHA explains that labels and paints may eliminate electrical resistance and can possibly "conceal defects, cracks, penetration, and any damage that would be otherwise readily identifiable." OSHA goes on to explain that any labels or paint used on hard hats must comply with manufacturer's instructions, or the employer must demonstrate that the labels do not affect the reliability or "reduce the ability to identify defects."

In short, labels are acceptable if they do not adversely affect a hard hat's protective rating or make it more difficult to find potential defects and damage. Some beneficial uses of labels include placing names, titles, and certifications on hard hats. Labels with names and titles can help identify workers in emergencies, while certifications can help identify when workers are authorized to be in specific areas. In all cases, labels should be used strategically, to convey information when needed. Labels should not be used for purely decorative purposes.

LYME DISEASE is caused by bacteria transmitted by the deer tick.

Lyme disease may cause symptoms affecting the skin, nervous system, heart and/or joints of an individual. Over 77,000 cases have been reported to the New York State Department of Health since Lyme disease became reportable in 1986.

WHO GETS LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease can affect people of any age. People who spend time in grassy and wooded environments are at an increased risk of exposure. The chances of being bitten by a deer tick are greater during times of the year when ticks are most active. Young deer ticks, called nymphs, are active from mid-May to mid-August and are about the size of poppy seeds. Adult ticks, which are approximately the size of sesame seeds, are most active from March to mid-May and from mid-August to November. Both nymphs and adults can transmit Lyme disease. Ticks can be active any time the temperature is above freezing. Infected deer ticks can be found throughout New York State.

HOW IS LYME DISEASE TRANSMITTED?

Not all deer ticks are infected with the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Ticks can become infected if they feed on small animals that are infected. The disease can be spread when an infected tick bites a person and stays attached for a period of time. In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36 hours or more before the bacteria can be transmitted. Lyme disease does not spread from one person to another. Transfer of the bacteria from an infected pregnant woman to the fetus is extremely rare.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE?

In 60-80 percent of cases, a rash resembling a bull's eye or solid patch, about two inches in diameter, appears and expands around or near the site of the bite. Sometimes, multiple rash sites appear.
The early stage of Lyme disease is usually marked by one or more of the following symptoms: chills and fever, headache, fatigue, stiff neck, muscle and/or joint pain, and swollen glands. If Lyme disease is unrecognized or untreated in the early stage, more severe symptoms may occur. As the disease progresses, severe fatigue, a stiff aching neck, and tingling or numbness in the arms and legs, or facial paralysis can occur. The most severe symptoms of Lyme disease may not appear until weeks, months or years after the tick bite. These can include severe headaches, painful arthritis, swelling of the joints, and heart and central nervous system problems.

WHEN DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

Early symptoms usually appear within three to 30 days after the bite of an infected tick.

DOES PAST INFECTION WITH LYME DISEASE MAKE A PERSON IMMUNE?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection. Even if successfully treated, a person may become reinfected if bitten later by another infected tick.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR LYME DISEASE?

Early treatment of Lyme disease involves antibiotics and almost always results in a full cure. However, the chances of a complete cure decrease if treatment is delayed.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT LYME DISEASE?

Deer ticks live in shady, moist areas at ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush and shrubs, usually no more than 18-24 inches off the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods and around old stone walls. Deer ticks cannot jump or fly, and do not drop onto passing people or animals. They get on humans and animals only by direct contact. Once a tick gets on the skin, it generally climbs upward until it reaches a protected area. In tick-infested areas, your best protection is to avoid contact with soil, leaf litter and vegetation. However, if you garden, hike, camp, hunt, work, or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, you can still protect yourself:

- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.
- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt.
- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors and check again once indoors.
- Consider using insect repellent. Follow label directions.
- Stay on cleared, well-traveled trails. Avoid contacting vegetation.
- Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls.
- Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening.

Spring Energy-Saving Tips

The following tips from the U.S. Department of Energy can help.

1. **Service your air conditioner.** Easy maintenance, such as routinely replacing or cleaning air filters, can lower your cooling system's energy consumption by up to 15 percent.

Also, the first day of spring could serve as a reminder to check your air conditioner's evaporator coil, which should be cleaned annually to ensure the system is performing at optimal levels.

2. **Open windows.** Opening windows creates a cross breeze, allowing you to naturally cool your home without switching on air conditioners. This is an ideal tactic in spring, when temperatures are mild.

3. **Use ceiling fans.** Cooling your home with ceiling fans will allow you to raise your thermostat four degrees. This can help lower your electricity bills without sacrificing overall comfort.

4. **Cook outside.** On warmer spring days, keep the heat out of your home by using an outdoor grill instead of indoor ovens.

5. **Install window treatments.** Energy-efficient window treatments or coverings, such as blinds, shades and films, can slash heat gain when temperatures rise. These devices not only improve the look of your home but also reduce energy costs.

6. **Caulk air leaks.** Using low-cost caulk to seal cracks and openings in your home to keep warm air out — and cash in your wallet.

7. **Bring in sunlight.** During daylight hours, switch off artificial lights and use windows and skylights to brighten your home.

8. **Set the thermostat.** On warm days, setting a programmable thermostat to a higher setting when you are not at home can help reduce your energy costs by approximately 10 percent.

9. **Seal ducts.** Air loss through ducts can lead to high electricity costs, accounting for nearly 30 percent of a cooling system's energy consumption. Sealing and insulating ducts can go a long way toward lowering your electricity bills.

10. **Switch on bathroom fans.** Bathroom fans suck out heat and humidity from your home, improving comfort.

MARCH WORD SEARCH

For a chance to win a cool prize, complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to lisa.drake@oswego.edu OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for February was Vanessa Sereno. Look for:Triangle, Factory, Fire, Workers, Immigrants, Poverty, Working Conditions, Exploitation, Victims, Union, Fire Escape, Locked Doors, Hard Hat, Construction, OSHA, Regulations, Requirements, ANSI, Replace, Damage, Support Strap, Manufacturer, Protective, Lyme Disease, Bacteria, Deer Tick, Nymphs, Adults, Rash, Protection, Air Filters, Evaporator Coil, Breeze, Fan, Caulk, Thermostat, Ducts, Humidity.

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Calvin's Tip of the Month:

While most dogs love to feel the wind on their furry faces, allowing them to ride in the beds of pick-up trucks or stick their heads out of moving-car windows is dangerous. Flying debris and insects can cause inner ear or eye injuries and lung infections, and abrupt stops or turns can cause major injury, or worse!

DUTCHISM FOR MARCH

PRIORITIES

As the sand flows down the funnel,
The more my needs become a tunnel.
Narrow but direct
Carefully select
To focus on tomorrow
Seeking joy, not sorrow.