



Risk Management Solutions



Fall 2019

A Quarterly Newsletter of the AMIC/MWCF Loss Control Division

Employee Burnout: A Workplace Safety Hazard?

This article originally appeared in Fisher & Phillips, LLP's August 2019 online newsletter and is reprinted here with permission. For additional information, visit <https://www.fisherphillips.com/resources-newsletters-article-employee-burnout-a-workplace-safety-hazard>

Employee burnout is now an officially diagnosable condition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), which recently updated its definition, employee burnout is not a **medical** condition. Instead, the WHO calls burnout an "occupational phenomenon." Here's how the organization is defining it:

Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: (1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; (2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and (3) reduced professional efficacy. Burnout refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

The WHO's definition likely comes as no surprise to the multitude of employees who have experienced a sense of feeling "burnt out" at some point in their careers. But what does this mean for employers? Are you now liable for employee burnout in the workplace? Can burnout be considered a safety hazard? Here's what you should know about employee burnout and its safety implications.

Burnout And Worker Safety

First and foremost, no Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards govern work-related burnout. That means there are no OSHA regulations requiring you to have a workplace "employee burnout" policy or plan for dealing with workers affected by burnout.

However, under the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act, you have a duty to protect all employees from certain workplace hazards. When you think about an employer's obligations to keep its workplace free of hazards, maybe you think of machine-guarding, lockout/tagout, or fall hazards. Maybe you even think of the less obvious hazards, such as ergonomics, workplace harassment, and violence. But rarely does anyone consider burnout a hazard. Yet recent studies suggest that employee burnout has the potential to impact many facets of work performance and safety.

For instance, some studies suggest that burnt-out employees have less awareness of their surroundings and struggle to maintain workplace safety practices, resulting in the misuse of heavy machinery, delayed emergency response, poor driving, employee fighting, and issues caused by getting behind on work-related tasks. If left unaddressed, a burned-out employee has the potential to be an unsafe worker which could lead to a workplace accident that affects other employees who suffer injuries.

While we are not aware of OSHA citing an employer for not preventing burnout, injuries as a result of a burned-out employee could potentially result in costly citations and workers' compensation claims. Because of these potential risks, it's important to take the appropriate precautions to reduce any potential liability.

What Should An Employer Do?

To prevent burnout from having a negative impact on workplace safety (and to avoid or lessen the risk of liability), early identification and intervention is key. While it's easy to tell whether a worker is wearing a hard hat, safety glasses, or other pieces of personal protective equipment, it is often difficult to determine whether someone is dealing with work-related burnout. With this in mind, you and your managers should be on the lookout for some common warning signs, such as trouble with concentration, fatigue, low morale, anxiety, irritability, alcohol or drug use, workplace incidents, and violence.

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Employee Burnout continued

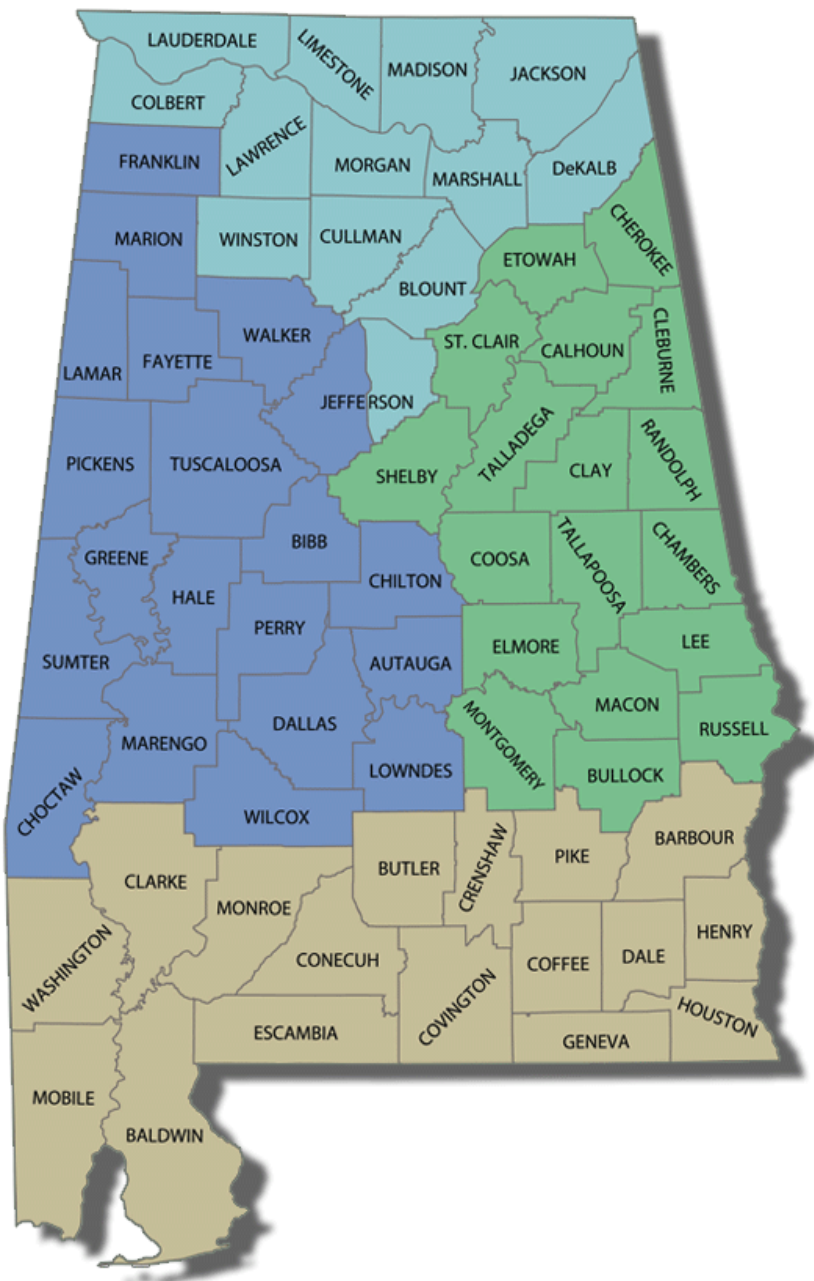
Whether or not any of these early signs are detected, you can start by simply talking to employees about burnout. You can also offer training and support, discuss available resources (such as employee assistance programs and paid time off), and how to report safety concerns, injuries, and illnesses. You should also be prepared to address symptoms should any come up. Keep in mind, OSHA law prohibits you from retaliating or discriminating against a worker for reporting a safety issue, injury, or illness. With the WHO's new definition of burnout as an "occupational phenomenon," this could possibly include any concerns regarding burnout hazards that are reported or discovered.

Conclusion

Employee burnout is not an obvious hazard; however, neglecting to control work-related burnout hazards can have an adverse effect on safety in your workplace. Creating awareness campaigns and training initiatives to recognize symptoms of employee burnout and the safety hazards caused by fatigue or lack of concentration may save your workplace from injuries and illnesses down the road. ■

Loss Control Territories

■ Aaron Reeves ■ Wade Campbell ■ Todd McCarley ■ Stephanie Southerland



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Loss Control Welcomes Wade Campbell, GSP!

Originally from Hopkinsville, Kentucky, **Wade Campbell** joined the Loss Control Division as a Loss Control Representative in August. He is a 2019 graduate of Murray State University where he earned his Bachelor's degree in Occupational Safety and Health. In addition, he has obtained his Graduated Safety Practitioner (GSP) certification. Wade enjoys spending quality time with friends and family and loves to cheer on his beloved Kentucky Wildcats. **Welcome, Wade!**



Defining Moment

Wasp, Hornet and Yellow Jacket Danger

Wasps, hornets and yellow jackets are present state-wide and are active throughout the spring, summer and fall. In milder climates, colonies are able to survive year round. Nests are encountered in numerous locations and often are disturbed by construction activity. Unlike bees, they are able to sting numerous times and inject venom with each sting. The colony will recognize a threat only when an intruder is within three feet of the nest, but when disturbed, the entire colony will defend it.

Construction equipment/tractors with enclosed cabs, which may sit idle for long periods, are a favorite location for colonies to form. Operators should be aware and check their equipment carefully before entering the cab.

Nests can also be encountered in sign posts, under bridges and other sheltered areas. Areas to be disturbed should be inspected, prior to the work, and measures taken to remove or destroy the nests. Aerosol sprays can be used in the evening when the colony is at the nest and least aggressive.

Many species build nests underground which can be disturbed by mowers, tractors, weed-eaters or simply walking in the area. For underground nests, water can be introduced to flood the colony.

An individual's reaction to being attacked can vary widely, from those who are unaffected to others who have life threatening allergic reactions and require immediate medical attention. The degree of reaction will be relevant to the number of stings. Swelling is a first negative reaction and shock can be a secondary reaction. Medical attention should be sought *immediately* and the victim's behavior monitored for a reasonable period of time.

These nuisances are most active during daylight hours. They have aggression towards humans only when protecting their nests. Unfortunately, their nests are often in conflict with humans. Be alert and aware.

SAFETY DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE FOR 2020 WORKERS COMP PREMIUMS!

The Municipal Workers Comp Fund (MWCF) works to keep the premiums for our members as low as possible. In addition to the many available discounts MWCF members may qualify for, a full 10% Safety Discount can be earned by appointing a Safety Coordinator, signing the *Safe Workplace Guidelines, Post Accident Drug Testing Agreement* and having an approved *Medical Protocol* in place. These programs not only help to reduce claims but also put thousands of dollars back into the budget of those municipalities and municipal entities to be used elsewhere.

2020 Safe Workplace Guidelines

The *Safe Workplace Guidelines* is comprised of safety guidelines each member is encouraged to follow. It is updated annually and mailed to every MWCF member during November. **If it is signed and returned by December 1, 2019, a 3% discount will be reflected on the initial 2020-2021 billing. This must be renewed each year. Credit cannot be issued for any *Safe Workplace Guidelines* received after February 1, 2020.**

Post Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing Program

The MWCF provides an additional 3% discount for those members that commit to a *Post Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing* program. In order to qualify, a member must sign a "Participating Commitment" (which will be enclosed with the above mentioned document) and have such program certified by their attorney that the member's drug and alcohol policy is Fourth Amendment compliant. Unlike the *Safe Workplace Guidelines*, this document does not have to be renewed each year.

Medical Protocol

Another 3% discount is available to those members who establish and implement a *Medical Protocol*. This program is a great benefit to both the member and the claims management team. A medical protocol form will be included in the November mailout for those members that do not yet have one on file. **For further information, call MWCF at 1-888-736-0210.**

MWCF members who participate in all three programs will receive a bonus 1% discount – earning those members a full 10% discount on their annual premium for 2020! **All members are encouraged to watch for the *Safe Workplace Guidelines* information packet coming in November and return it promptly to take advantage of these benefits.** It will also be available for downloading on our website by going to the MWCF page www.almwcf.org. ■

Need Help Filing Work Comp Claims?

For step-by-step instructions, visit:

www.almwcf.org

2019 SKIDCAR Schedule

Through an advanced, computer-controlled driver training vehicle known as the SKIDCAR System, trainees learn how to react quickly and safely to a range of hazardous driving conditions. Training is conducted throughout the state at a minimal cost. Visit www.losscontrol.org for more information.

Ozark	September 24 – 27
Saraland	October 15 – 25
Fayette	November 5 – 8



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Loss Control Division

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- 7.079 – Tree Trimming Safety
- 7.105 – Groundskeeping Safety – Dealing with Bugs & Critters
- 7.106 – Groundskeeping Safety – Be A Pro
- 7.121 - Video Guide to Chainsaw Safety
- 7.131 – Social Media: Reduce the Risk
- 7.133 – Resisting the Flu: How to Minimize Your Risk
- 7.152 – Ladder Safety
- 7.154 – Chainsaw Safety
- 16.007 – Special Events...Special Liabilities
- 18.003 – Seasons in the Sun: Driving Challenges in Spring & Fall

New Police DVDs

- 9.122 – Foot Pursuits/America's Most Wanted

Video/DVD requests to: **Sonya McCarley at: 334-262-2566**
sonyam@alaim.org or FAX at 334-262-2809

Need Help Filing Work Comp Claims?

For step-by-step instructions, visit:

www.almwcf.org

Employment Practices Law Hotline

1-800-864-5324

Through a toll-free Employment Practices Law Hotline, members can be in direct contact with an attorney specializing in employment-related issues. When faced with a potential employment situation, the hotline provides a no-cost, 30-minute consultation.

www.losscontrol.org