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You Can Help Lift The Terrorism Cloud

The atmosphere of grief and fear left by such horrific events as the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States can cloud workplace safety. Your employees may be distracted by loss of family, friends or co-workers, or by feeling insecure about the future.

These are not the best conditions for concentrating on doing work safely and well. Now, more than ever, you need to emphasize safe work practices to prevent injuries caused by inattention.

Talk to your employees about safety today and everyday. Urge them to focus on work as much as possible because they don't need a preventable workplace accident to add to their sorrow. A car wreck or a fall in the office would be one more thing to endure.

Your role as a supervisor is especially important now - setting a good safety example and helping your employees to do their best at work. How can you help?

- Be available. speak personally to your workers to find out how they are coping.
- Refer troubled workers to sources of help, such as your company's employee assistance program and crisis response teams. Help them arrange needed time off.
- Allow your workers to talk among themselves to sort out their feelings.
- Allow them contact with their families so they can work knowing their loved ones are safe.
- Accept that different people will handle grief differently. Some will not want to talk about it. Others won't be able to stop talking about it. Some could be carrying around cell phones, rubber gloves and gas masks, while others will act as though nothing has changed. Respect these differences.
- Allow your workers to take action together to respond to the recent events. A fund-raising effort to aid victims of hunger or terror, or a blood-donor drive, can counter feelings of helplessness.
- Familiarize your workers with the new security procedures the agency may have initiated in response to the terrorist attacks. Guards at the front door, new

identification badges and codes, data backup, increased chemical security all take some getting used to.

- Try not to feed fear by engaging in rumor and speculation. When employees have questions about company plans in the wake of terrorism or worries about their security at work, get answers from management if possible. Set a good example by sticking to the facts.
- Just like your workers, you may also be feeling stressed about the recent events. These are normal reactions. Help yourself by finding someone to talk to –a friend, family member, clergy person or health professional. Take care of your physical health by getting enough sleep, exercise and nutritious food.

Safety Tip: Remember the same old culprits of motor vehicle crashes, falls, chemical exposures and other occupational hazards continue to kill and injure on the job. Don't allow the preoccupation with current events to jeopardize the safety of you and your fellow co-workers.

