

OR-OSHA, 350 Winter Street NE, PO Box 14480, Salem, Oregon 97309-0405

For immediate release:
March 12, 2007

For more information:
Kevin Weeks, Public Information Officer, 503-947-7428
kevin.s.weeks@state.or.us

Fifth-annual Safety Break for Oregon slated for May 9

Event will focus on motor vehicle safety

Each day four people in the United States die as the result of an on-the-job motor vehicle crash, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In Oregon motor vehicle incidents have been the leading cause of fatal workplace injuries four in the past five years and result in one-quarter of workplace deaths.

This is why Oregon employers are encouraged to talk to workers about workplace motor vehicle safety during the annual "Safety Break for Oregon" on May 9.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services, Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) coordinates the one-day event, designed to raise awareness and promote the value of workplace safety and health in preventing injuries and illnesses. The event takes place in workplaces across Oregon and is designed to be flexible to meet an employer's safety and health program needs.

"We haven't done everything we can to create safe workplaces in Oregon until we address motor vehicle safety," said Michael Wood, administrator of Oregon OSHA. "Employers need to treat their driver safety and fleet safety with the same seriousness and planning that we advocate to prevent employees from being killed on the job."

2007 marks the fifth-annual Safety Break, which occurs on the second Wednesday in May. The theme for this year's event is "Take Five for Safety and Health – Keep Moving Forward."

"Every employer's business philosophy should value safety and health," said Wood. "The annual Safety Break for Oregon creates a chance for employers and workers to come together to discuss safety and health, and to begin or continue a conversation about how to prevent injuries and incidents in the workplace."

Many employers celebrate the Safety Break for Oregon with safety meetings, award recognition lunches, family gatherings, or special events. Such events promote management and employees working together on safety and health concerns, which results in fewer injuries and reduced workers' compensation costs for employers.

Managing driver safety, which starts with commitment from the top, helps to ensure that employees follow safe practices and that their vehicles are properly maintained. Some guidelines for an effective driver safety program include:

- **Develop a written driver safety policy.** Tell employees, in writing, what management expects of them when they are drivers and passengers. Employees should also acknowledge, in writing, that they have read and understood vehicle-safety policy and procedures.
- **Check workers' driving records.** Check employees' driving records before they get behind the wheel and annually thereafter. Records checks are provided for a nominal fee by the Drivers and Motor Vehicle Services (DMV) division of the Oregon Department of Transportation. Screen potential employees who have poor driving records.

- **Investigate accidents.** Ensure that all vehicle accidents are properly reported and investigated.
- **Keep vehicles safe.** Develop procedures that ensure vehicle-safety inspections and maintenance are done on regular schedules. Have employees report mechanical problems to their supervisors immediately.
- **Reward and discipline.** Give credit to employees who have exemplary driving records. Recognition or special privileges can be effective incentives depending on the workplace culture. Make it clear to employees that those who violate safety policies will be disciplined.
- **Invest in education and training.** Ensure that employees understand vehicle-safety policy and highway safety rules when they're hired. All employees should have the opportunity to periodically update their knowledge and skills.
- **Know the rules.** The Oregon DMV Vehicle Code Book includes all requirements for vehicle registration, driver licensing, and rules of the road. You can download copies of the Vehicle Code Book from www.oregon.gov/ODOT/DMV.

Additional information about the Safety Break for Oregon is available on the Oregon OSHA Web site, www.orosha.org

* * * * *

Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.dcbs.oregon.gov.

###