



The Eclipse, Worker Safety and Triffids.

Insights

8.20.17

The Eclipse, Workers Safety and Triffids.

Tomorrow is the much-awaited Eclipse and employers are beginning to worry that they may not have taken all appropriate steps to protect their employees. Shockingly, OSHA does not maintain a *Workplace Eclipse Safety Standard*. Accordingly, employers should analyze the hazards presented by an Eclipse as they would any other hazard at the workplace. Even if spiders, snakes and poison ivy are universal, employers nonetheless protect their employees from these hazards when present in the workplace.

1. Emphasize **Situational Awareness** tomorrow. People will be distracted and run into one another's vehicles/ Traffic is predicted to be horrendous in areas of good visibility, and who knows how many stupid things will occur tomorrow. If I were a truck driver, I'd chose the best viewing point as my coffee break.

2. Do not assume that employees will exercise common sense and use good judgment.

As an example, the most common reaction of a diner when told that their plate is "very hot," is to ... you guessed it Touch said hot plate.

3. Education is the essential first step for every employer. Every news outlet in the free world is talking about Eclipse safety, but do not assume that your employees read the omnipresent recommendations. Below are just a few decent sources:

- [NASA Recommendations on Safe Practices.](#)
- [National Safety Council Recommendations.](#)
- [Space.com Where, When and How to View the Solar Eclipse.](#)

4. Determine positions and job tasks that may reasonably be exposed to the hazard. Drivers and construction workers outside, servers at rooftop lounges, etc.

5. Determine the seriousness of the exposure and appropriate responses.

6. Educate them regarding the hazards present at your worksite or with their jobs and provide instruction and/or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- Maybe instruct the employees to go inside and don't look at the darned Eclipse during the critical periods? Provide appropriate glasses? This decision may be a philosophical decision rather than a safety decision. I don't believe that you want employees working, driving, or operating equipment while wearing special glasses.
- And if you do decide to provide special glasses, make sure that anything you provide as an employer is absolutely properly certified and approved. Reports are rife about inadequate or non-certified glasses making an appearance. From the August 18 *Athens Banner Herald*:

Some schools canceling classes or keeping pupils inside due to non-certified eclipse glasses

- And while there are reportedly safe homemade/jury rigged ways to watch the Eclipse. Employers don't need to recommend them. Personally, the Pinprick Method or a homemade Camera Obscura sound pretty cool to me, but not as an employer recommendation.

7. NOTE: **Filmmakers, news crews and others have a higher duty because their work may involve observing, studying or filming the event.** Of course, these groups are better equipped in terms of equipment and special expertise, but should not become casual or sloppy. As an analogy, more experienced highly skilled construction workers fall to their deaths each year than inexperienced rookies. Superior knowledge and frequent exposure breeds contempt. Don't assume that scientists and photographers do not need to be reminded to NOT take short cuts.

The Day of the Triffids.

When I was 12, I read John Wyndam's 1951 groundbreaking sci-fi book, *The Day of the Triffids*, which scarred me for life with regard to Eclipses and other fun viewable solar displays. Don't confuse the thoughtful sci-fi thriller book with the entertaining but not nearly as good 1962 movie.

In this chilling book, everyone who wakes up the day after watching an amazing solar display is - you guessed it - blind. This would be bad enough, but it seems that some years before, scientists discovered and began improving these nasty plants, which produced highly useful products, but also grew to about six to ten feet high, shuffled about, and had a deadly stinger with which they could strike prey from six or seven feet away. Oh. And they were nice to look at - this conversation was presumably overheard at a local botanical garden: *"look dear at that colorful and beautiful death dealing flora from the bowels of hell! Can we get one for our garden so that baby Floyd can play in its colorful shade? Lowes has them on sale!"*

So, pretty soon, acres were devoted to cultivation of Triffids or to charming city parks and gardens. Stingers were regularly trimmed off and the wondering plants were chained to steel spikes driven into the ground. What could possibly go wrong! Yep; nothing accept a worldwide instantaneous plague of blindness, thus guaranteeing that the Triffids get free, grow back their stingers and become the apex predators. Since they are plants, reproduction is easy and apparently the critters had decidedly crappy attitudes once they formed large freely roaming murderous hordes.

I may overcome my irrational fear of solar displays and enjoy tomorrow's display ... or I may hide in the basement huddled with firearms, MREs and cans of Roundup. We'll see.

Howard