

TOOLBOX TALK #12

HELP AN ASTHMA ATTACK VICTIM



One out of 12 adults have asthma according to the American Lung Association (ALA), and about 11 million workers are exposed to at least one known asthmagen (a substance that causes asthma symptoms) at work.

Occupational asthmagens include wood dust, chemical fumes, vehicle exhaust and mold.

Symptoms of an asthma attack include shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing, and chest tightness.

If a coworker has an asthma attack in your presence, would you know how to respond?

ALA says to follow these five steps:

1. Have the person sit in an upright position.
2. Get the person's quick-relief inhaler. Never leave an asthma attack victim alone. If you can't find the quick-relief inhaler, call 911 or seek other medical assistance.
3. Help the person follow their action plan for an asthma attack. You may need to uncap the inhaler, shake it for them, etc.
4. If the person continues to breathe hard and fast, can't walk or talk, or has nostrils that are wide open (indicating the person is struggling to get enough air) – or if no relief is provided after using the inhaler – get medical help.
5. Call 911 if the person stops breathing, becomes unconscious, has blue lips, continues to struggle to breathe or shows other signs of distress.