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# The Physician's Corner

By Fiona Wilson, MD, Chief Physician for CCSF Employees



From the date of our last Safety Newsletter, COVID-19 numbers continue to decline but are far from gone. San Francisco is still reporting over 90 new cases per day, and we know there is a routine under-counting of cases due to home testing. San Francisco test positivity rates are down to 5%, meaning that for every 100 tests there are an average of 5 positive results. (Percentages-wise it was at a similar level last in April 2022). As holiday in-person activities ramp up and there is more congregating indoors, we expect COVID-19 cases to rise.

To prevent COVID-19 disease spread, DHR highly recommends all employees obtain the new bivalent booster. DHR also continues to support masking, particularly in crowded situations such as large in-person groups, or while on transit, and in required settings or circumstances.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) currently recommends the bivalent booster to all who are eligible, even if they have had a prior booster. Both Pfizer and Moderna have developed their own bivalent booster. Pfizer is available for those aged 12 and up, and Moderna aged 18 and up. A bivalent booster offers broader protection as it covers prior COVID elements and added protection against the more recent Omicron variant. It does not guarantee that the boosted individual will not get COVID, however, infection should be minimal to mild without risk of hospitalization or death and offers a reduced chance for long COVID-19.

Boosters continue to be required for employees working in the health sector and for those working in designated high-risk settings, such as care facilities for the elderly and jails. Employees who work in roles with greater chance of COVID-19 exposure or for those with increased personal risk of infections or vulnerable family members, bivalent boosters are highly encouraged.

The new bivalent booster replaces any prior booster formulations which are no longer available and is now the only option available for boosting. It can be given as close as two months from completion of an initial vaccine series, or receiving a booster, or three months after having had a COVID-19 infection. As a reminder, you can also obtain your annual flu vaccine and can get both at the same time.

Bivalent boosters are abundant and can be accessed through your own healthcare provider, pharmacies, and retail locations. You can search for appointments via your smartphone or by going to [myturn.ca.gov](https://myturn.ca.gov).



Detailed answers to your questions on the bivalent booster can be found here: <https://sfdhr.org/sites/default/files/documents/COVID-19/Booster-FAQs.pdf>.

# Ways to Promote Workers' Safety

By Tyler Nguyen and Peggy Sugarman

Keeping workers safe requires a proactive approach. Not only to prevent injuries but also to reduce the high cost of workplace safety incidents.

## What safety initiatives can be implemented now?

There are several proactive approaches to keeping employees safe that literally pay for themselves. Approaches include new innovative ways to maintaining the rigors of a safety culture and using modern technology to provide immediate triage should a workplace safety incident occur.



Below are three effective safety initiatives to implement at your workplace, in conjunction with your State mandated Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP).

### 1. Normalize Risk Assessments

Risk management is the foundation for any successful workplace injury prevention program. Human risk in the workplace is a variable that changes every day. Because risks vary, these programs require an ongoing level of maintenance to ensure their effectiveness.

It's a compelling argument for why risk assessments should happen more frequently. The difficulty with more regular safety assessments is time. Often, they are limited to an annual or perhaps quarterly basis. Going beyond the annual risk assessment, which is a bare minimum

# Ergonomics at Home

*Information Courtesy of State Compensation Insurance Fund*

You're suddenly teleworking and you want to do all you can to ensure you protect yourself from ergonomic issues like neck, back, or wrist pain. Most likely your home workstation is going to be less than ergonomically perfect because you may need to work from the kitchen table, countertop, or other surface. From changing positions, to removing clutter, there are often simple things to do that can make a great impact on your ergonomic health. Here are some tips to help you adjust your home work environment to fit properly and comfortably.

**Movement:** The main thing to remember is to move around so you're not in any one position for an extended period. Take frequent [micro breaks](#). When you feel discomfort, move to a different position. For example, you can stand during phone calls or meetings, or move to a new location, such as from the kitchen table to the counter. **Set a goal to get out of your chair at least once per hour.**

**Task repetition:** Break up longer work tasks by alternating work duties.

### Set Your Chair Height:

Sitting in the chair, your thighs should be parallel to the floor (i.e., knees and hips at the same height). If your feet aren't flat on the floor, use a footrest. And, if the chair has no cushion, put a thick blanket or a thin pillow on the seat.

**Back support:** Sit back in your chair. If you don't have good lumbar support, use a pillow as needed for comfort.

**Armrests:** If your chair has armrests, place them at the height of your keyboard for arm support.

### Keyboard and Mouse

**Height:** With shoulders relaxed, bend elbows to 90 to 110 degrees and bring the keyboard and mouse under your hands.

**Mouse:** Mouse should be next to the keyboard at the same height.

### Monitor Height

**Height:** The top of the screen should be at eye level.

**Placement:** For a single monitor, position it directly in front of you. For dual monitors, position the main monitor in front of you.

standard, is critical not only because human safety variables change but also because the regulatory environment fluctuates.

We recommend monthly risk assessments (especially for high-risk, high-hazard departments) to help your department identify risks and make on-the-job changes to improve worker safety. This can include everything from taking immediate action with a blocked fire door, observing how employees lift heavy items, cataloging what protective gear employees wear, and identifying what kinds of repetitive tasks employees undertake.

## 2. Put Safety in the Job Description

Think about adding a safety standard to the job description. Doing so helps to build a safety culture that talks openly about risk—and how to mitigate it.

Creating safety recommendations requires a thorough job safety analysis that integrates better occupational health and safety principles into every position in your department. This process pays for itself in three ways:

- Reduce overall department risk of serious injury by making safety a job requirement;
- Proactively retrain employees to avoid repetitious tasks that cause harm to their bodies;
- Attract candidates by illustrating that your department works hard to protect its' employees.

To establish safety recommendations first observe employees across roles and departments to determine potential injury risk, then work with managers, operations and engineering as needed to develop solutions to reduce those risks. Ultimately, the objective is prevention of workplace safety incidents.

## 3. Build a Culture of Safety

Safety culture should be more than just a buzzword in risk management circles. The belief is that better safety practices can—and should—permeate every corner of your operation. This requires:

- A shared mission as company or department that include employee safety and wellbeing.

**Under the work surface:** Keep the space free from clutter, allowing the legs room to move for comfort. Also, keep the area leading to and from your workstation clear to eliminate slip, trip, and fall hazards.

**Phone:** While typing and talking on the phone, use a headset or speaker, especially if you're using a mobile phone.

Be sure to check out SF Employee Portal, My Learning "Office Ergonomic Awareness Training", Class Code: HRD 19038-0001, a web-based learning module for more ergonomic tips in an office environment.

## No One is Driving that Car! Driver safety tips . . .

According to a New York Times technology reporter, Cruise, a subsidiary of General Motors, has rolled out its fleet of 30 commercial driverless car service in San Francisco. The service is limited to the hours between 10 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. when City traffic is lightest. These vehicles are limited to traveling within a small number of neighborhoods and do not go faster than 30 miles per hour.

Add this to the mix of people sharing surface streets in the city (transit MUNI system, bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, and pedestrians), maintaining an enhanced level of awareness and practicing safe driving every time you're behind the wheel are essential tools for the road.

Ignoring distractions while driving and maintaining focus on the road is key to driving safely. To keep focused, follow these steps:

**Pay Attention-** Don't use mobile phone or any other electronic device while driving. Pull over to eat or drink. It takes only a few minutes. Don't attempt to retrieve items that fall to the floor.

**Slow down** - Speeding gives you less time to react and increases the severity of an accident.

**Defensive driving** - Defensive driving is when motorists use accident-preventing techniques with a focus on driving safely.

To practice defensive driving:

- Be aware of what other drivers around you are doing and expect the unexpected.
- Assume other motorists will do some unsafe maneuvers, and always be prepared to avoid it.
- Keep a 2-second cushion between you and the car in front of you. Make that 4 seconds if the weather is bad.

- Buy-in from organizational stakeholders at every level.
- Reinforced safety learning opportunities at every stage of the employee lifecycle.
- Accountability and responsiveness to workplace safety concerns at all levels.
- Analysis of your department injury statistics received monthly from DHR. These stats will tell you where you may need to focus your efforts at injury prevention.

A safety culture is a marathon toward a new way of thinking that realigns your department's values. It requires constant advocacy from leadership. For companies with a strong safety culture, it's the drumbeat behind everything they do.

The ultimate goal of management and labor-led health and safety initiatives is to incorporate safety into every aspect of departmental operations.

## SFPD Public Safety

*By Captain Chris Canning  
Tenderloin Station Commander*

The mission of the San Francisco Police Department is to protect life and property, prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime. The Tenderloin Station is committed to this mission and to creating a safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

The Tenderloin Station routinely collaborates with businesses, residents, schools, community organizations and City partners to identify and problem-solve local challenges. Supporting partner agencies and local non-profits, addresses some local challenges and increases safety for residents, visitors, and businesses in the community.

Additionally, the Tenderloin Station has taken action to focus enforcement on specific neighborhood challenges. The Tenderloin Station has augmented its' foot-beat officer deployment to create a greater presence and high visibility in challenged areas, particularly those frequented by local commuters and persons using BART or other public transportation. Tenderloin foot-beat officers have focused enforcement on issues

**Make a safe driving plan** - Build time into your trip schedule to stop for food, rest breaks, phone calls or other business. Have items needed within easy reach – such as toll fees, toll cards and garage passes. Adjust your seat, mirrors, and climate controls before putting the car in gear.

**Stay Alert-** Always wear your seat belt and drive sober and drug-free. Avoid driving when you're tired. Be aware that some medications cause drowsiness and make operating a vehicle very dangerous.



## Personal Safety Tips

*Information courtesy of City College of San Francisco  
Police Department, San Francisco Police Department*

By taking a few simple precautions, you can reduce the risk to yourself.

### Street Safety

- Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you, especially if you are alone or it is dark.
- Whenever possible, travel with a friend.
- Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys where someone could hide.
- Walk confidently at a steady pace.
- Make eye contact with people when walking.
- Do not respond to conversation from strangers on the street—continue walking.
- If you carry a purse, carry it securely between your arm and your body. Although a purse-snatcher's intent is to steal the purse, your personal safety may depend on not clinging to it.
- Do not use or wear anything that will impede your vision or hearing.

### Car Safety

- Always lock your car doors after entering or leaving your vehicle.
- Park in well-lighted areas.

surrounding open air drug use, increasing engagements with drug users, and addressing narcotics violations. Tenderloin Station has also been engaged in numerous operations including fugitive recovery/ arrest operations and stolen property enforcement operations, working closely with investigative units and law enforcement partners.

The Tenderloin Station always strives to educate its local resident and business community with information to enhance public safety. Some things to remember to enhance personal safety are always maintain situational awareness, stay off of cell phones or texting, keep purses and bags zipped up, when possible travel with a friend or group, always keep your car locked and avoid leaving valuables in your car, and “if you see something, say something.”

If something observed does not merit an emergency 9-1-1 call, the non-emergency line can be reached at (415) 553-0123.



*Safety is Everyone's Responsibility!*

- Have your car keys in your hand so you don't have to linger before entering your car.
- Check the interior of your vehicle for intruders before entering your car.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to a public place or a police or sheriff station.
- If your car breaks down, open the hood and attach a white cloth to the car antennae. If someone stops to help, stay in your locked car and ask them to call the police, sheriff or a tow truck service.
- Don't stop to aid motorists by the side of the road. Make a phone call requesting help for them.

#### **While Waiting for a Bus**

- Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you.
- Try to avoid isolated bus stops.
- Don't open your purse or wallet while boarding the bus— have your pass or money already in your hand.
- Keep jewelry out of sight; don't flash jewelry; turn rings around so the stones don't show.

#### **On Board Buses**

- During off hours, ride as near to the bus operator as possible
- If someone bothers you or makes you feel uncomfortable, change seats. Inform the driver of the situation.
- Carry your wallet inside your coat, or in a front pocket.
- Keep your belongings in front of you and hold close to your body with both hands.
- Be alert to pick pocketers on crowded buses; check your purse or wallet if someone is jostling, crowding or pushing you.

#### **Four ways to increase your personal safety:**

1. Reduce or eliminate opportunities that may make you a target.
2. Increase awareness in places you're most comfortable.
3. Trust your instincts regardless of feeling embarrassed.
4. Prepare your schedule daily with safety in mind.

#### **Be responsible for your personal safety:**

- Be alert to potential danger
- Trust your instincts
- Be aware of all your surroundings
- Avoid anything that does not feel safe
- Anticipate possible problems
- Be vigilant and prepared for anything
- Report suspicious activity

# Congratulations and Farewell

By The Workers' Compensation Division

A lifetime achievement award from the San Francisco Police Officers Association is the latest accolade presented to Workers' Compensation Director Peggy Sugarman. Dr. Sugarman will be retiring in December after almost 47 years in the workers' compensation industry, the last 10 of which she has served as the City's Workers' Compensation Director.

Dr. Sugarman's experience in the California's Workers' Compensation System has been uniquely varied, providing her with an overall perspective and solid belief in "how workers' compensation should be done". Peggy is the former Chief Deputy Administrative Director for the State Division of Workers' Compensation, legislative and regulatory policy consultant to the California Applicant's Attorneys Association, and regulatory training director with the former Grancell workers' compensation defense law firm with over 100 lawyers statewide.

Peggy currently serves on the Board of Directors for the California Workers' Compensation Institute, the statewide research organization. She has also served on the Board for the California Self-Insurers Association, the Insurance Educational Association, and the Association of Workers' Compensation Professionals (AWCP). She holds a BA in psychology from UC Davis, Master's degrees in counseling and organizational psychology, and a Ph.D. in organizational psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology.

In 2020, Dr. Sugarman was honored with a Good Government Award from San Francisco Bay Area Planning & Urban Research (SPUR) for her work in pioneering automatic deposits for employee's workers' compensation disability payments, negotiating two Alternative Dispute Resolution programs with the SF Police Officers Association and the SF Firefighters Association, and for other program innovations. She was also awarded a White Helmet in 2017 by the San Francisco Firefighters Association for her work in managing industrial cancer cases and received a similar commendation from the San Francisco Police Officers Association. She has been responsible for managing the self-insured Workers' Compensation Program, the Catastrophic Illness Program, and assisting smaller departments with injury prevention and compliance with safety regulations.

As one chapter comes to an end, please know that your influence carries on. Countless lives have been impacted through the knowledge you have imparted. You have done a super job at the City and County of San Francisco. Thanks for everything. You will be missed!

