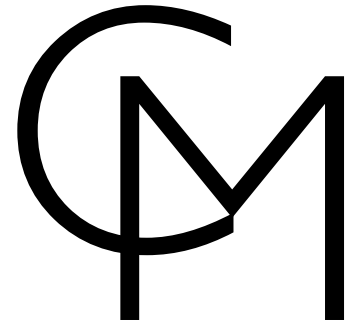


# The California Merchant

News for the California Merchant Safety Association



May-June 2023

Vol. 35, No. 3

## Would your organization fall apart in a crisis?

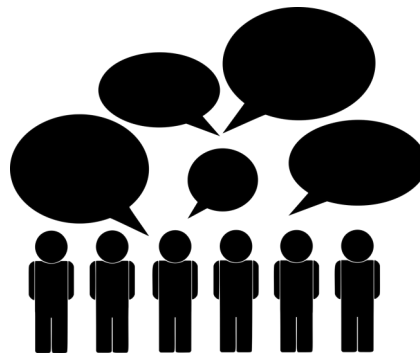
By Jonathan Bernstein

A severely neglected aspect of crisis communications is crisis prevention. Prior to suffering their first major crisis, few organizations invest the time necessary to take a hard look at their own vulnerabilities except in the context of legally required risk management.

A vulnerability audit is a thorough self-inspection designed to identify potential crises before they occur and pave the way for creation of a crisis communications plan which will allow an organization to avoid, or at least minimize, the negative impact of such crises.

This is done by:

- Collecting data from people in key information flow positions. Senior executives are not always aware of all of the circumstances which can lead to the birth of a crisis. Hence, interviews are conducted with both white- and blue-collar personnel at various echelons of the company, typically a minimum of 20 interviews. Multi-location businesses usually require interviews with remote location personnel who have insights specific to their area.
- Conducting interviews on an extremely confidential basis. Ideally, interviewees are told that the firm's senior management will not, under any circumstances, be told "who said what." Information gleaned during the interview process



includes (1) potentially harmful trends (facts or perceptions reported by multiple sources); (2) significant inconsistencies between answers from different subjects; (3) non-verbal cues that there may be something amiss in certain areas, which then prompts further questioning; and, (4) consensus opinion regarding the probability of certain types of crises.

- Looking for operational and communications weaknesses which could cause or contribute to a crisis. A "loose cannon" employee is a more obvious potential source of problems, even if he/she is well-intentioned, but there are less obvious issues revealed through the vulnerability audit process. For example, one past client relied on a single fax machine for incoming and outgoing faxes from its headquarters offices during a crisis, which tremendously delayed communication with a number of important audiences. The simple

Please see CRISIS, page 2

## In This Issue

*Forget coffee—perk up the natural way through diet, exercise*

*Vector control: Mosquito season is here*

*Declutter your space to breathe easier*

*Steps to safety in a retail environment*

**... and more**

## Crisis: Results include lessened cost, response time

Continued from page 1

addition of fax machines, creation of broadcast fax/email lists and similar tactics can often greatly improve crisis response.

- Anticipating actual crisis scenarios. Every organization is vulnerable to certain types of crises inherent in the nature of its business, plus others inherent, perhaps, in the nature of its particular style of operating. Additionally, the vulnerability audit has been known to reveal “skeletons” of which senior management may not have been aware.
- Reporting results. The conclusions from the vulnerability audit are then analyzed and presented both as a in-person briefing and in writing as follows:

-Recommendations for systems revisions. If there are changes (such as the

forementioned addition of fax machines) which can optimize crisis prevention and response, they are recommended.

-Discussion of scenarios most likely to affect the client company. The audit will lead to a list of “most likely” scenarios with which the client company may deal in the future. At the in-person presentation of audit results, that list is finalized (which often results in deletion or addition of some scenarios) and then the management team brainstorms both general and audience-specific key messages for each scenario.

The information collected during the vulnerability audit process is used as the basis for writing a manual which will guide the entire organization in the communications aspects of responding to crisis situations, to include clear delineation of individual responsibilities and draft responses which reflect the company’s values

while considering the public’s sensitivities and need to know.

The bottom line results include:

- Crises prevented before they happen
- Response time for crisis response dramatically enhanced
- Operational weaknesses corrected
- Cost of crises reduced

One would think that, given those benefits, this would be an automatic part of the business planning process. Perhaps one day it will be but, for now, less than five percent of businesses I’ve encountered have undergone the crisis vulnerability audit and crisis plan creation process. More common is the purchase and adaptation of an “off the shelf” crisis plan. How good are they? Well, would you run your business on an off-the-shelf business plan?

## Natural ways to increase focus and productivity

**B**urned out on Starbucks? People do not have to rely on artificial stimulants such as coffee to maintain peak performance levels, according to neurologist Dr. R. L. Kaplan.

Kaplan provides the following advice on how to maintain energy and mental acuity:

### Eat brain food

Brain structure and function is markedly affected by what you eat. Neuroscientific studies indicate meals that follow a carbohydrate to protein ration of 1:1 allow for maximal productivity and mental

efficiency. Feed your brain vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals and stimulate your brain instead of merely sustaining it. A light meal that starts with a variety of fresh fruit, followed by nuts and seeds coupled with vegetable juice can offer the mental energy and clarity you need to make through a busy and stressful day.

### Increase the neurochemicals of concentration

During a mid-day break, engage in aerobic exercise by taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Even a short burst of exercise increases brain catecholamine levels which in turn boost ability to

concentrate and focus. These are the same brain chemicals that Ritalin-like stimulants work on.

Many studies have shown the efficacy of taking a walk to help sharpen and refocus thoughts. Not only does taking a walk—even just around the block—help regulate emotions and clear the head, leading to better ability to think, but creativity is stimulated by looking at a unique environment. So stepping away from your desk to look at the outside world while walking can actually help your brain make new pathways, which can help you solve that thorny problem you’ve been turning over in your mind all day.

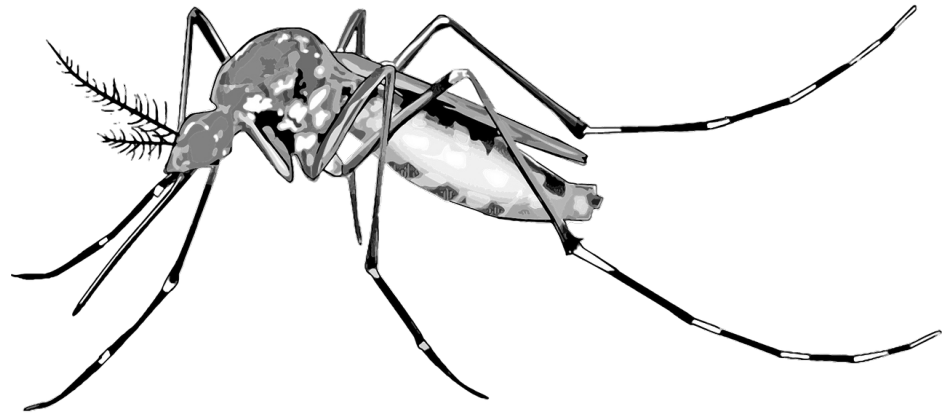
### Maintain peak mental performance by recharging your brain

The scientific benefits of napping are mounting. Numerous studies have shown a mere 15 minute nap after lunch boosts mental performance, increases physiological and subjective alertness, and improves mood -- regardless of how much sleep you had the night before.

“Mental fatigue is common among almost all workers and across all job types,” said Dr. Kaplan. “The important thing to remember is that the easiest tweaks of your daily routine can provide huge benefits in mental sharpness and overall energy.”

# April showers bring... mosquito season

**M**ore than 200 types of mosquitoes live in the continental United States and US territories; of these 200, about 12 types spread germs that can make people sick. Other mosquitoes bother people and are considered nuisance mosquitoes. In general, nuisance mosquitoes do not spread germs. Because you can't tell which mosquito could be spreading germs when it bites, it is important to protect yourself from mosquito bites.



## Some Mosquitoes Spread Germs

Only some types of mosquitoes can spread germs (viruses and parasites) to people and animals. West Nile virus is one of the most common mosquito-borne diseases in the continental United States. Dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus outbreaks have occurred in US states and territories, including Florida, Hawaii, Texas, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

Malaria was common in the United States into the 20th century. Most of the continental United States has Anopheles mosquitoes (particularly *An. freeborni* and *An. quadrimaculatus*), which can spread malaria. Local US mosquito-borne spread has resulted in more than 150 locally acquired cases and more than 60 limited outbreaks in the United States over the past 50 years. In addition, more than 2,000 cases of malaria are reported annually in the United States, with most cases occurring in returned travelers.

## How mosquitoes get infected

For a mosquito to get infected with a germ and then spread that germ to people or animals is a complex process.

1. A mosquito takes a blood meal from a person or animal.
2. If the blood meal contains a germ, then the germ must pass from the mosquitoes' gut into its body. Mosquitoes do not transmit all kinds of germs, only those that can

grow or multiply in the body of the mosquito.

3. The germ multiplies in the body of the mosquito. Then the germ moves from the body into the salivary glands where saliva is made. This process takes 2-3 weeks.

4. The next time a mosquito bites a person or animal, the germ passes from the salivary glands into the blood of the person or animal being bitten.

5. The person or animal can get sick.

Ability of a mosquito to get infected with and spread a germ depends on:

- The type of germ
- Environmental conditions, like temperature
- The amount of a germ eaten during a blood meal
- The age of the mosquito

In the United States, the most common types of mosquitoes that can spread germs include:

- Aedes species mosquitoes (*Ae. aegypti*)
- Culex species mosquitoes (*Cx.*

*pipiens*, *Cx. tarsalis*, *Cx. quinquefasciatus*)

- Anopheles species mosquitoes (*An. freeborni* and *An. quadrimaculatus*)

## Some Mosquitoes Are a Nuisance

Most types of mosquitoes in the United States are nuisance mosquitoes. These mosquitoes do not spread germs that make people sick.

Nuisance mosquitoes can become a problem immediately following heavy rains, or natural disasters, such as hurricanes or floods. When people spend time outside cleaning up after a hurricane or flood, they are more likely to be bitten by nuisance mosquitoes. Large numbers of nuisance mosquitoes can affect recovery efforts. For this reason, local or state mosquito control experts will often take steps to control these mosquitoes.

## Mosquito Bites

Female mosquitoes bite people and animals to get a blood meal. Most female mosquitoes cannot produce eggs without a blood meal. Male mosquitoes

Please see VECTOR, page 4

# Vector: Prevent bites with permethrin

Continued from page 3

do not bite people and animals.

## What Happens When a Mosquito Bites You

When a mosquito bites you, it pierces the skin using a special mouthpart (proboscis) to suck up blood. As the mosquito is feeding, it injects saliva into your skin. Your body reacts to the saliva resulting in a bump and itching.

Some people have only a mild reaction to a bite or bites. Other people react more strongly, and a large area of swelling, soreness, and redness can occur.

## Symptoms

Mosquito bite signs include:

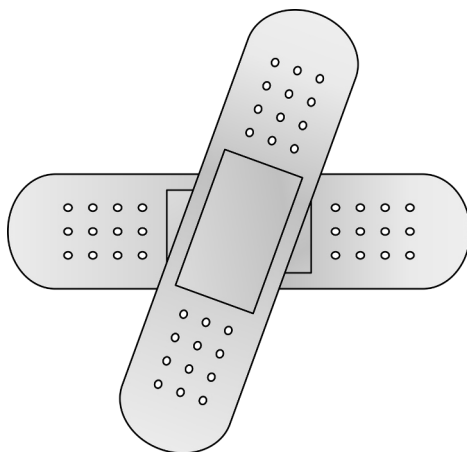
- A puffy and reddish bump appearing a few minutes after the bite
- A hard, itchy, reddish-brown bump, or multiple bumps appearing a day or so after the bite or bites
- Small blisters instead of hard bumps
- Dark spots that look like bruises

More severe reactions can occur in:

- Children
- Adults bitten by a mosquito species they haven't been exposed to previously
- People with immune system disorders

People experiencing more severe reactions may have the following signs:

- A large area of swelling and redness
- Low-grade fever



- Hives
- Swollen lymph nodes

## Treatment

- Wash the area with soap and water.
- Apply an ice pack for 10 minutes to reduce swelling and itching. Reapply ice pack as needed.
- Apply a mixture of baking soda and water, which can help reduce the itch response.
- Mix 1 tablespoon baking soda with just enough water to create a paste.
- Apply the paste to the mosquito bite.
- Wait 10 minutes.
- Wash off the paste.
- Use an over-the-counter anti-itch or antihistamine cream to help relieve itching. Follow the product label directions.

## Complications

- Infected bite
- Do not scratch bites. They can become infected.

- An infected bite may appear red, feel warm, or a red streak will spread outward from the bite.
- See a healthcare provider if symptoms worsen.

## Mosquito-borne diseases

- Mosquitoes spread germs through bites. Viruses like West Nile and dengue and parasites like malaria can make you sick.
- A mosquito gets infected with a virus or parasite when it bites a person or animal that is infected. The infected mosquito can spread germs to other people or animals through bites.
- Not everyone infected with a mosquito-borne germ gets sick.

## Prevent Mosquito Bites

You can protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites.

- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin.
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin.
- Control mosquitoes inside and outside.
- Prevent mosquito bites when traveling overseas.
- Check your property and workplace for any standing water to avoid mosquito breeding. Treat ponds and pools to avoid mosquito infestations.
- Report any standing water or untreated pond or pool to your local county or vector control agency.

# Breathe easier with less clutter

By Janet L. Hall

**C**lutter and chaos in your bedroom could be the reason you wake up with a headache, a stuffy nose, or runny eyes.

Maybe you feel stressed out, depressed, fatigued, or distracted when you wake up to all your clutter and chaos.

We spend one-third of our lives in our bedrooms. A place we go to to find solitude, peace of mind, and slumber. But how can you expect to get a good night sleep or to awaken with vitality and energy with all that clutter facing you?

What's the first thing you see when you wake up in the morning? Is it piles of clothes, books, newspapers, and mail all over the place? Are you stepping on and tripping over stuff on your floors? Do you just want to pull the covers over your head and stay in bed rather than face all that clutter and chaos?

Let your world stop for 15 minutes and announce, "This is the day I'm going to make a change in my life." Jump out of bed, throw back the curtains, open the shades and windows (yes, even if it is 20 degrees outside!), turn off the news, crank up some music and do the Toss In Box!

Get a box (a garbage bag will also work) and pick up everything off the floor and do the Toss In box! (TIP: Don't stop and dawdle over any items, we'll do that later).

Hop over to the dresser, bureau, makeup table, and nightstands and take everything off that you don't use daily or nightly and do the Toss In Box!

Waltz on over to your sitting area, chaise, or clothes valet and take it ALL off and do the Toss In Box!

Now, doesn't your bedroom feel better already? Don't YOU feel better?

Grab 10 more minutes, another box, a garbage bag, your car keys and sprint out to your car. Throw on some

music and do the Toss In Box. Get rid of everything that you don't use daily (please keep your emergency equipment). Get rid of everything that you don't need. Don't forget to check under the seats, in the glove compartment, and the trunk.

Forget about those boxes for now. Get ready for work and with a song in your heart, another box, and garbage bag, zip off to work.

When you get to the office take another 10 minutes and proclaim to your co-workers that you are changing your ways. Go into your office, cubicle, or workspace and start doing the Toss In Box.

Okay, now reality starts to sit in. You still have a lot of work to do because you have to go through ALL that STUFF! Don't panic, I'm still with you.

Decide which of your boxes is the most important box to attack first. Set a date and time that you can start sorting through ALL that STUFF.

What's that I hear? "But I don't have time." You have to FIND the time. Make an appointment with yourself and keep it, just as you would go to the doctor or attend a meeting.

Decide on a reward you will give yourself when you finish sorting your box, such as a new outfit, tickets to the theatre or ballgame, or my favorite, a chocolate milkshake.

I've developed a technique called TEASER which will give you 11 actions you can take to help you sort through your boxes of clutter. What? Teaser only has six letters...you'll see. First, yell, "What is ALL this STUFF!" Get a garbage can or bag, 10 boxes and label them with the following:

Toss it

~~ It's not yours, you don't know who it belongs to, it's outdated, it can't be repaired, you don't need it.

End it

~~ You don't want it, you want to cancel it, or you don't read it.

Act on it

~~ Needs an action, such as your signature, phone call, or immediate attention.

Store it

~~ This will have three boxes: Current Stuff, Things I need to Reference, and Historical Stuff.

Enter it

~~ Information you need to enter into your planner or computer.

Refer/Recycle/Read it/Repair

~~ It belongs to someone else or you think they need it.

~~ Use it again or put into a recycling bin.

~~ Something you want/need to read.

~~ Something that can be fixed.

Be ruthless, determined, and honest and start sorting ALL your STUFF by using the TEASER.

Your next step to take is to schedule a date and time (don't forget your reward) to act on the items that you sorted.

Call, write, or email the items you want to END or stop from coming into your life.

Decide how and where you will STORE your current, reference, and historical papers or 'stuff'.

Sit and ENTER all your information.

Pack up and take items that you are REFERRING to someone else, RECYCLING, or taking to get REPAIRED.

Put READING material in area you like to sit and read and create a TO GO reading folder to take with you whenever you leave the home or office.

Congratulations! Keep up the good work.

*Janet L. Hall is a professional organizer, speaker, and author of "Secrets of a Professional Organizer."*

# Attract media coverage to your business

By June Campbell

Advertising is expensive. PR is often low cost or free. Try these tips for attracting free PR to your business. But here is a word of caution. When sending press releases to the media, remember that less is more. The journalist who encounters a press release from your company every week learn to ignore anything with your name on it.

## 1. Capitalize on an Anniversary

Is your business having a significant anniversary? Tenth year in business? Ten thousandth customer served? Five thousand books sold? Arrange some sort of celebration, draft a press release and contact your local media. You can never tell. You must might coverage from the local newspaper, radio or television station.

## 2. Donate Something

Does your networking group have draws for door prizes? Offer to donate the prize, then give something that's heavily branded with your businesses name and contact information. Similarly, find out if local charities are engaged in fund raising opportunities. Offer one of your products or services as a prize or to be auctioned.

## 3. Host a Special Event

Have a Singles Night, a Kid's Night, or a Senior Citizen's Night. Send a press release to your local media. A supermarket did a smashing business following a well publicized Singles Night complete with dancing in the aisles, games and contests.

## 4. Sponsor Something

Provide sponsorship at a trade show, a convention, a sporting event, or an arts festival. Sponsor a local kid to attend an event in another city. Sponsor a kid's sports team. Offer a scholarship to help a young person attend university. Remember to send the press release.

## 5. Decorate Creatively

Put up a stunning decoration or window display for the holidays, or for



spring, or fall, or in recognition of some particular event in your city. Then invite the media to take a look. The key is to have something unique or original that'll warrant pictures and video taping.

## 6. Write Articles

If you're in business, you're an expert on some topic. Write articles on your area of expertise. Submit them to local or national media, magazines, web sites, trade journals or other pertinent publications. Your article should not be a promotion of your business, but should inform readers about a topic of interest. Accountants might write articles on tax tips, for example, or florists could write about plant care.

## 7. Let Them Know You're an Expert

When newsworthy stories become available, media often look for a local expert for quotes and comments. Contact your local or national media, and let them know you are available to comment on topics within your area of expertise. Suppose your expertise is e-commerce, for example. Next time your local paper has an e-commerce-related story, they just might contact you for a comment. You (and your business) will get some excellent and cost-free publicity.

## 8. Get T-shirts and Go Public

Decorate t-shirts with your company's logo. Sign up your staff to participate in charity walks and other community events. Ensure that everyone wears the t-shirts.

## 9. Donate Something to a Local Charity

Donate books, used computers, products or services to a school or charity. In one community, local businesses attracted enormous publicity by organizing an event in which they outfitted adolescent youth from low-income families for the spring prom. Participating clothing shops, beauticians, florists, even taxi companies got in on the act and attracted enormous publicity while doing good works.

## 10. Publicize a New Product, Service or Research Finding

Have something new to offer? If it's at all unique in your area, write your press release and send it to media and trade journals. Even if you get mentioned in the gossip column of a trade journal, it's still good publicity!

## 11. Offer Something Unique

Local shops in one community worked together to hold a Men's Night and shortly before the Holidays. Males received assistance in purchasing lingerie, perfumes, jewelry and accessories for the woman in their lives. It was a new concept in the area and a big success. The media loved it.

*June Campbell is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in print and online publications.*

# SAFETY ... IT PAYS



## Keeping workers safe in a retail environment

**M**any believe that there are very few safety risks working in a retail store. This is far from the truth. Every work environment including retail stores have many safety risks that you must keep in mind.

As you may have heard, repetitive strain injuries are a common risk in retail businesses. These injuries cause damage to your muscles, tendons and nerves, and can develop over time when you do the same task over and over.



To prevent repetitive strain injuries, use good posture. Besides standing or sitting up straight, work with your arms and hands in a relaxed, natural position. Grasp items with your entire hand, not just your thumb and forefinger. Avoid twisting your wrists as you swipe the

scanner, stock shelves or do other repetitive work. Take your scheduled breaks to move around, stretch and relax. Talk to your boss if you develop signs of repetitive strain such as pain or numbness in your hands.

Back injuries are also a common hazard of retail work, as you wrestle large boxes of product onto handcarts and lift groceries into customer vehicles. Lift safely by getting as close to the load as possible and squatting down to pick it up and put it back down. Avoid leaning over or bending or twisting your back.

Slips and falls are a hazard in a retail store too. When you clean up spills or remove debris you are not only protecting the customer from falls, you are protecting yourself. Shelf stocking also has its hazards. Use ladders and other climbing devices safely. Never attempt to “bunny hop” a ladder to a new location. Instead, climb down and move it.

Properly use a safety knife to open cartons, and always pay attention to what you are doing if you don't want to leave a finger behind.

Probably the most dangerous piece of equipment in a retail workplace is the compactor-shredder, a machine used to prepare paper, cardboard and other materials for recycling or disposal. Many young workers have died gruesome deaths in compacting and shredding machines in workplaces. Compactors use powered rams to crush materials and shredders use blades to chop materials into small pieces—think what they can do to you. Before you use one of these machines, make sure you get thorough training from a qualified instructor. Read and understand the manufacturer's operating instructions. Never attempt to bypass a machine safeguard because it's there to save your life. Don't let anyone talk you into taking shortcuts with a compactor-shredder. Even if you just work near such a machine, make sure you know how to stop it instantly in case someone else gets in trouble.

## OSHA CORNER

Please visit the following address on the web to download helpful safety posters, guides and pamphlets for a safer workplace.

<https://www.osha.gov/publications>



# Controlling bad habits for a healthy future

Our lives are controlled by cause and effect. It's the basic principle that one action can lead to another, ultimately determining our overall well-being. When it comes to taking care of ourselves, the cause-and-effect relationship between our health and fitness is undeniable—if we don't make healthy choices, it can lead to a vast array of negative consequences. Here's why understanding cause and effect is so important when it comes to our health and fitness.

## Cause And Effect In Life

Cause and effect play a huge role in our health and fitness. Our bad habits are often the culprit for health problems in the present and future, with effects ranging from short-term pains to long-term complications. For example, smoking regularly can cause respiratory disease and illness, while bad dietary patterns over time can lead to obesity or high cholesterol levels. It is essential to consider this cause and effect when it comes to health: bad habits now create bad outcomes later down the line. It is important for us to take action before detrimental consequences set in. Recognizing bad habits early on creates an opportunity for healthy change, which will result in better overall health both now and in the future.

## The Effects of Unhealthy Choices

It may be tempting to ignore the consequences of unhealthy decisions, but unfortunately, they can sometimes have long-term effects on our bodies. Poor eating habits, such as overindulging in processed foods or drinking sugary drinks, can take their toll over time. Eating too much or not enough, or not getting enough exercise

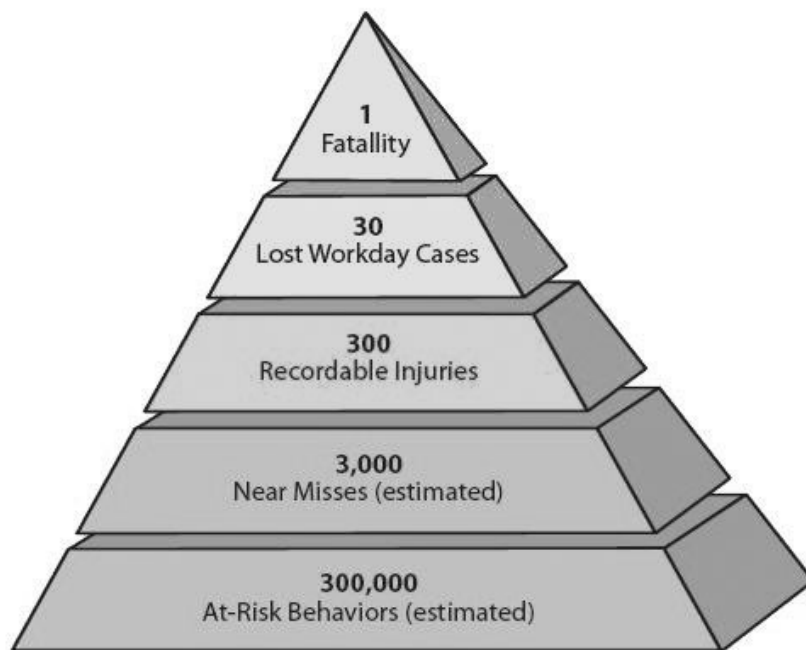
can all contribute to weight gain, fatigue, low energy levels, poor sleep quality, weakened immune systems, anxiety, depression—the list goes on! Understanding the effects that unhealthy choices have on your body will help you make better decisions in the future.

## The Benefits of Healthy Habits

On the flip side, making healthy changes in your life can also have many positive benefits for both your physical and mental wellbeing. Eating nutrient-rich foods like fruits and vegetables can strengthen your immune system while providing you with energy for daily activities. Exercise has been scientifically proven to boost moods; regular physical activity releases endorphins which act as antidepressants by providing a feeling of euphoria. Additionally, adequate sleep gives your body time to repair itself while also improving alertness during waking hours. All these things combined will lead

to improved overall health.

Taking care of yourself is a lifelong process that takes dedication and consistency. Sometimes, it takes trial and error before we find what works best for us individually. But once you understand how cause and effect play an integral role in your health and fitness journey—by understanding how certain actions affect the way you feel—you'll be able to make informed decisions that will ultimately benefit you both now and in the long run. Pay attention to what works for you—and don't forget that small changes matter! A few simple tweaks here and there could go a long way toward helping you reach all kinds of goals related to your health and fitness journey. With this knowledge under your belt, why not start making those changes today? Make sure you know what causes what in order for you to get closer to achieving true optimal wellness!



"The CALIFORNIA MERCHANT" is a published bi-monthly newsletter of The California Merchant Safety Association. Annual subscription is available with membership in the California Merchant Safety Association. For membership information, call (562)446-0013.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to "California Merchant Safety Association" at 12501 Seal Beach Blvd. Suite 250, Seal Beach, CA 90740.