



YCPARMIA Safety Journal

September, 2009

It Pays To Pay Attention

Why safety meetings and training are important

One of the best ways to get the safety information you need to avoid job accidents is in safety meetings and training sessions. That's where you'll learn what you have to know to protect yourself and your co-workers from workplace hazards.

Here are some true stories of workers who probably didn't pay enough attention in safety meetings and training sessions.

✎ **A worker's arm was crushed** when he reached into a conveyor belt mechanism to remove a blockage. He turned the power off, but didn't lock out the conveyor. A co-worker who couldn't see him turned the power back on.

✎ **An employee died** when he tried to stop a hazardous solvent spill by turning off a valve instead of following workplace rules to evacuate. He wasn't wearing a respirator and was overcome by toxic vapors.

✎ **A worker was killed** when a piece of metal he was cutting bounced off the table and hit him in the head. He wasn't wearing a required hard hat.

✎ **A worker in a trench was killed** in a cave-in because he failed to properly shore up the sides.

✎ **Two workers were killed** when a crane fell over on them because a co-worker had loaded the crane above its rated capacity.

✎ **Both workers died** when an employee with no protective equipment or safety line tried to help a co-worker who was overcome by cyanide gas while cleaning a tank.

✎ **One employee died and one was seriously injured** because the overloaded scaffold they were working on collapsed, sending them 12 feet to the ground.

✎ **An employee was killed** when she tried to slip past a backing forklift. The operator didn't see the worker behind him and she was crushed between the forklift and a wall.

If only these workers had paid more attention in safety meetings and safety training sessions, they would have known that what they were doing was dangerous and might result in an accident. Had they known, they might have escaped injury or death. Don't be like them! Be informed.

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ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready for the next safety meeting or safety training session?

- Are your mind, eyes, and ears open and ready to see, hear, and learn what you need to know to prevent accidents, injuries, and illness on the job?
- Do you have a notebook or paper and a pen so you can take notes about points brought up during the meeting?
- Are you prepared to participate in the meeting or training session by asking questions, raising safety concerns, sharing your knowledge and experience, and giving your advice and suggestions when appropriate?
- Are you ready to listen to what co-workers say about the topic being discussed and to hear their concerns about safety?
- Are you willing to take what you learn back to work and put it to use right away?

If your answer to all these questions is an unqualified "yes," then yes, you are ready for the next safety meeting or training session.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Sometimes people think that they're just supposed to show up at safety meetings and training sessions to listen, that they're not supposed to talk. But that's not true.

Don't be afraid to ask questions if there's anything you don't understand. And don't hesitate to speak up if you have something useful to contribute. Participation is an important part of learning.

Wake Up and Be Safe!

Don't let drowsiness cause accidents

Sleep experts say many people don't get enough sleep. Statistics show that as many as 40 percent of Americans say that they've been sleepy enough during the day that it interferes with their daily activities. And that can have a negative impact on workplace safety.

To counteract drowsiness on the job and prevent accidents:

- Take a minibreak and do some stretching exercises right at your workstation.
- Go to the restroom and splash cold water on your face.
- Take a walk during your rest break to help refresh and wake you up.
- Drink a caffeinated beverage.

Avoid tasks that require sharp physical or mental skills when you're very tired. For example, operating machinery, driving a vehicle or forklift, or handling hazardous materials could be dangerous if you're not fully alert.

- Be honest and don't put yourself or others at risk.
- Switch to a less risky task, if possible, until you feel more awake.
- Talk with your supervisor if you're concerned about your abilities or someone else's. Also talk to your supervisor if you're taking a medication that makes you feel drowsy and could put you or a co-worker at risk.

There's a direct connection between fatigue and accidents. So keep alert!

How Can You Help?

Five ways you can help improve safety

A lot of people wonder how they can help make the workplace safer. If you're one of them, here are five simple things you can do to minimize hazards and maximize safety for you and your co-workers.

- 1. Make suggestions about how we can improve our safety and health programs.** You probably know more about your job and what it takes to do it safely than anybody else. So your ideas and suggestions about how to make your job safer are important.
- 2. Report potentially hazardous conditions.** Anything that doesn't look or "feel" right probably isn't. Don't ignore any potential hazards, no matter how small. Tell a supervisor right away.
- 3. Help new workers learn about our safety procedures.** New workers need to know all about safety from Day One. Help them get oriented, and you'll help prevent accidents.
- 4. Use information from safety meetings and training sessions on the job.** That's a sure way to improve safety.
- 5. Ask questions.** Don't let any question about safety go unanswered. That answer could be the thing that saves you from an accident and injury.



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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SAFETY

September is **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month**. Why are we talking about drugs and alcohol? Because the majority of Americans abusing drugs, alcohol, or both are employed. And their abuse problem almost always causes a *safety* problem.

People working under the influence of drugs or alcohol are three times more likely to have accidents. And they may not be the only ones hurt. Co-workers are often injured as a result of someone else's substance abuse on the job.

Think about these facts:

- ⇒ Some 6.5 percent of full-time and 8.6 percent of part-time workers are current illegal drug users.
- ⇒ Alcohol is the most widely abused drug among working adults. An estimated 6.2 percent of adults working full time are heavy drinkers.
- ⇒ Of 12.4 million heavy drinkers, 30.5 percent are also current illegal drug users.
- ⇒ More than 60 percent of working Americans know someone who has reported for work under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- ⇒ Up to 40 percent of workplace fatalities and 47 percent of injuries are linked to substance abuse.

There's no time like the present to take action if you or someone you know has an addiction problem. Awareness of the problem and of the treatment options is the first step to a healthier, safer life. The next step is getting help. And there's help just a phone call away for anyone who wants it.

Emergency!

Are you prepared?

This month is **National Preparedness Month** and, of course, preparing for natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other catastrophic events is the primary reason September was designated for this special event. But let's not forget general workplace emergency preparedness. Whether it's a big catastrophe that affects the whole community or a fire, chemical spill, or other emergency that just affects our workplace, you need to be prepared for difficult situations.

In the community:

- Become familiar with your community's emergency evacuation plan.
- Find out about emergency plans in the schools your children attend.
- Develop a family emergency plan for evacuating and for sheltering in place.
- Prepare an emergency kit and renew supplies as necessary.
- Conduct family emergency drills.

At work:

- Make sure you know the assigned evacuation route from your work area.
- Have an alternate route in case your primary route is blocked by fire, smoke, or other hazardous conditions.
- Understand procedures for sheltering in place.
- Be familiar with emergency duties you've been assigned.
- Know where to find fire alarms, first-aid kits, fire extinguishers, and other emergency supplies and devices.

Slipping Up on Safety...

Can send you on a trip to the hospital

Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common workplace injuries. Here's how to stay on your feet and out of the emergency room.

DO:

- ✓ Pay attention to where you're going and what's in the way.
- ✓ Wear sturdy shoes with nonskid soles, and keep shoelaces tied.
- ✓ Keep aisles, stairs, and walkways clear of tools, materials, and cords.
- ✓ Clean up leaks and spills right away.
- ✓ Block off and mark floor areas being cleaned or repaired.
- ✓ Close drawers when not in use.
- ✓ Stay away from dock and platform edges.
- ✓ Walk slowly, sliding feet, on slippery surfaces.
- ✓ Be extra careful on uneven floors or where the floor level changes.
- ✓ Report any slip or trip hazards you can't eliminate yourself.

DON'T:

- * Don't carry loads you can't see over.
- * Don't run, walk.
- * Don't jump off platforms or loading docks.
- * Don't ignore housekeeping tasks, especially if they involve walking areas.
- * Don't forget to wipe your feet when you come in to work on wet days.

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WHAT'S UP WITH PEOPLE WHO NEVER GET SICK?

You probably have co-workers or friends who never seem to get sick even when everyone around them is coming down with a cold or something worse. The health website WebMD says it has identified habits of super-healthy people that the rest of us might consider adopting.

Among these healthy habits are regularly using antiseptic mouthwash, eating an apple a day (for the antioxidant quercetin), taking vitamins like C and D, meditating, pursuing social connections, keeping a positive outlook, frequent handwashing, and getting plenty of sleep.

Researchers also say that pursuing martial arts training can help keep you healthy. If that's a little strenuous for you, just normal exercise like walking, riding a bike, playing tennis or golf, jogging, doing aerobics, or swimming can help prevent illness, too.

Not worrying about getting sick is another successful approach. Constant worrying causes an excess of hormones that can actually weaken the body's immune system, according to WebMD.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Loud noise can cause temporary or permanent hearing loss, tinnitus (constant or periodic ringing or roaring in ears), head-aches, and stress. That's why you're required to wear hearing protection on the job if you're exposed to a lot of noise. Wear hearing protection off the job, too—for example when operating power tools, chain saws, and lawn mowers.

Safety Myths and Facts

Don't be confused about which is which

These are among the most common misconceptions:

MYTH: It won't happen to me.

FACT: An accident can happen to anyone who fails to recognize hazards, fails to take proper precautions, or fails to pay attention while working.

MYTH: Accidents occur according to the law of averages.

FACT: Many workplaces have gone for years and years without having one accident. The law of averages has nothing to do with workplace safety. Accidents don't have to happen. People *let* them happen.

MYTH: Occasional accidents and injuries are just a price of progress.

FACT: Progress is about getting better, being safer, and working smarter. Accepting accidents as a cost of doing business is not acceptable.

MYTH: I'm tough and I don't bruise easily.

FACT: Nobody is so tough that they can get run over by a forklift, mangled by a machine, or poisoned by a toxic chemical and not feel it.

MYTH: I don't really need personal protective equipment (PPE).

FACT: Everybody needs to wear assigned PPE. It's sometimes the only thing standing between you and a life-threatening hazard.

What Do You Know?

Don't draw a blank on safety information

Here's a quiz to test your general safety knowledge.

1. If you see a safety hazard you can't safely fix yourself, _____ it.
2. Only use a fire extinguisher to fight _____, contained fires.
3. The _____ on a chemical container warns of safety and health hazards.
4. To protect workplace security, report _____ individuals or activities.
5. _____, such as safety glasses and hard hats, are personal barriers against job hazards.
6. If you don't understand a safety procedure or don't know if something is a hazard, ask a _____.
7. A hazardous space with limited entry and exit areas that only trained, equipped, and authorized personnel are allowed to enter is called a _____ space.
8. Never touch anything electrical with _____ hands.
9. When you have to lift an object, lift with your _____ muscles.
10. Places where fingers, hands, or other body parts can get caught between two surfaces or between moving machine parts are known as _____ points.

Answers: (1) Report (2) Small (3) Label (4) Suspicious (5) Personal protective equipment (PPE) (6) Supervisor (7) Confined (8) Wet (9) Leg (10) Pinch

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CELL PHONE SAFETY ON THE ROAD CONTINUES TO MAKE HEADLINES

Here's another study about the hazards of using a cell phone and driving. This one, conducted by University of Utah psychologists, concludes that drivers talking on cell phones are as impaired as a person with the 0.08 percent blood alcohol level that defines drunk driving in most states. Drivers are far more distracted by talking on a cell phone, the study reports, than by conversing with a passenger in the vehicle.

Using a sophisticated driving simulator, researchers found that drivers using a cell phone drift out of their lane and miss exits more frequently than drivers talking with someone in the vehicle.

Passengers may actually improve safety, says study co-author David Strayer, because the passenger "adds a second set of eyes, and helps the driver navigate and reminds them where to go."

Previous studies by the Utah scientists found that hands-free phones were just as distracting as hand-held models because the phone conversation is the biggest driving distraction.

