

Safety Meeting Best Practices

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Injury Incident Pyramid

This pyramid is nothing more than a representation of the statistics about injuries. Year after year, industry after industry, injuries statistically fall into this pyramid.

Near Misses – Unsafe Acts are the bottom of the pyramid. There are thousands of these. These are things such as not wearing a seatbelt in your car, not wearing steel toe boots or protective eyewear at a job site, or standing on the top rung of a ladder to change a light bulb.

Next up are Recordable Injuries. These are injuries that require more than basic first aid. The injury may require a prescription anti-biotic, physical therapy, a few sutures and things that are above and beyond first aid treatment. For all the thousands of near misses and unsafe acts, sooner or later it will result in an injury that requires this type of treatment.

Next up are Life Changing injuries. For every 600 recordable injuries statistically, year after year, industry after industry, there will be 30 life changing injuries. That is 5%. These are injuries such as amputations, major surgeries, broken bones and the like. These types of injuries will change your life and those who depend on you.

And finally at the top there is a **Fatal Injury**. For every 30 life changing injuries, there will be one fatal injury.

So what does this mean? We need to work on the unsafe acts and the near misses at the base of the pyramid. If you can reduce or eliminate those, then you can stop the cascade effect that comes with injuries to begin with. To eliminate the recordable and life changing injuries you need to reduce the near misses and unsafe acts.

The only way to stop it is to eliminate the unsafe acts and near misses.

Near Misses

A worker received an electric shock on a piece of equipment he was using. He was not injured, and he did not report the incident. A few days later another worker also received a shock from the same defective equipment, and again did not report the problem. Within days a third worker also received an electrical shock which killed him.

This true story illustrates what can happen when we ignore close calls in the work place. A close call is a chance to identify a hazard and correct it before someone is seriously injured or killed.

We have all had many experiences with close calls or near misses in our everyday lives. The best thing we can do is to pay attention to them and learn from them. For example, most of us have slipped while rushing down a stairway. We may have caught ourselves before falling, and then resolve to slow down in the future. Another example is pulling out to pass when driving and being faced with an on-coming car. We quickly pull back into our own lane, and tell ourselves next time we will make sure it is safe before we try to pass.

In both instances, there was the potential for a serious accident but we were lucky. We have learned something by the close call, and will probably be more aware in the future.

Close calls in the workplace serve the same function. They give us an opportunity to recognize that something is wrong and to do something about it before someone gets hurt.



Be sure to report near misses. You have the opportunity to help a coworker

Recordable Injuries Avoided

Trenching Safety Bulletin

On September 28, 1998 Bruce Rose Occupational Health and Safety Officer for the Department of Labor, was carrying out routine inspections on a water and sewer project in his area. Throughout the course of his inspection, he issued several directives and a Stop Work Order that required all work to cease until the trench the workers were operating in was appropriately sloped or equipped with a trench box in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. As the trench was approximately 13 feet deep in average soil, the regulations specify that the sides of the trench must be sloped at a ratio of one to one, or equipped with a trench box, before a worker is permitted to enter the excavation.



- The following day, as the company had complied with the inspector's directives and had a trench box installed the OHS officer performed an inspection, lifted the stop work order and permitted work in the trench to resume. Approximately three hours after work had resumed, two men were working in the trench box when the excavator traveled near the edge of the trench. The ground gave way and the excavator fell into the trench landing on its side on the trench box. The two workers inside the trench box escaped without injury, as did the operator of the excavator. Had the trench box not been in place, the outcome would have undoubtedly been different. The following day the workers contacted OHS Officer, Bruce Rose and expressed their thanks for the action taken.

Audit Yourself & Your Surroundings

Audit is a systematic or methodical review; to examine with intent to verify.

Audits can apply to your job. From a safety standpoint there is only one way to do a job — the safe way. Safety needs to be the first consideration in everything we do. It is possible that we may not always be doing this, so our continuing efforts to review or think about our jobs are auditing.

Contrary to an IRS audit which evaluates what we did not record, our job audit should evaluate what we did record. If we take the time to at least mentally think out the steps that we go through to perform a task, we can audit it to ensure we are safe.

Auditing ourselves

Look at these things prior to completing a task:

- PPE, do we have the correct eye protection, gloves, footwear?
- Do we need any special PPE such as a chemical flame retardant suit?
- Is our PPE in good condition?
- Do we have the correct tools and are they in good shape?
- Do we know how to operate the tools or equipment?
- Do we know how to accomplish the task safely?
- Do we know the harmful energy sources around the area and have we isolated them?



These are a just a few of the questions we should ask. However, they include some of the most important ones. Ensure you do a quick audit, prior to accomplishing a task. A more thorough one should be done if we're doing something for the first time or for the first time in a long time.

The Danger Zone - The Office

Compared to an industrial work environment, an office can seem like a safe place to work. However, many serious accidents and injuries occur on a regular basis in offices everywhere. Slips, trips and falls are one of the most common causes of workplace injuries. They can occur anywhere whether you are in the production area or in the office.

Office workers are injured by falls, fires and electric shock. They receive cuts and bruises from office tools and furniture. They develop long-term injuries from repetitive work such as keyboarding.

As you go through your day, use these safe work practices:

- Watch for obstructions which can cause tripping accidents. Cords and cables should not be placed across traffic areas. Even cords going to a power bar located next to a work station can trip a person getting up from the desk.
- Materials should be stored in designated storage areas, not in boxes on the floor.
- Briefcases, handbags and other personal items should be stored where no one will fall over them.
- Keep drawers of desks and cabinets closed.
- Clean up any spills, such as coffee or water, right way. If a spill cannot be taken care of immediately, arrange a barricade and a sign to warn people. Floors which are wet from cleaning should also be blocked off and marked by warning signs.
- Load file cabinets from the bottom up. Serious accidents have occurred when top-heavy filing cabinets have fallen over.
- Store sharp implements such as scissors, paper knives, and letter openers separately from other items to prevent cuts and puncture wounds.

- Use safe lifting techniques. It is just as easy to receive a back injury in the office as it is in the warehouse. To pick up a heavy item, squat down beside it. Use the strength in your legs, not your back, to raise it up. Bend your knees, not your back.
- Be alert to electrical hazards, which can cause fires and electrocution. Check for any frayed or damaged cords or plugs. Electrical repairs should be made only by qualified personnel.
- Don't overload electrical circuits. Extension cords are meant to be used only temporarily, so make sure the area is wired adequately for all of the electronic equipment such as computers, copiers and printers. Breakers which trip frequently are a sign of overloaded circuits.
- Don't use makeshift scaffolds such as a chair balanced on a desk when you are reaching for something overhead. Take the time to get a stepladder or stepstool.
- Repetitive strain injuries are increasingly common in offices. When doing work such as computer keyboarding, keep your hands and wrists straight and relaxed. Frequently switch to other tasks to give your hands a rest.



Cell Phone Distraction

It is estimated at the end of 2008 there were 4 billion cell phone users worldwide. "Can you hear me now?," the catchphrase used by Verizon, has become part of our culture. Cell phone use has expanded into every activity in our lives, from emergency communication to picking products from a grocery shelf. It sometimes seems people have no idea what to do with a spare moment other than make a cell phone call.

Whether you are in the presence of a user or you use a cell phone personally, using the phone is a significant distraction. Being distracted while driving, while operating tools and equipment, when walking across the street, when in public or at work, increases the risk of injuries and crashes.

Researchers have compared the level of distraction to a blood alcohol level of 0.08. Research also has shown that a cell phone conversation while driving is a greater distraction than conversing with a passenger. Drivers "reacted significantly slower to unexpected events in the first two minutes of the phone conversation and are, for a large part of the conversation, unaware of traffic movements around them."



Many states have banned the use of cell phones without a hands-free device. Although that may help a little, the distraction is still present. Your best bet is to pull over to the side of the road or pull into a parking lot if you must have the conversation.

Additionally, never utilize your cell phone out on our production floor. Go to an office, outside or the cafeteria to make the call.