Accident Prevention Safety Talk



Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Workplace accidents are unplanned or uncontrolled events that cause physical harm to workers on the job. Common **workplace accidents** can include falls, slips and trips and even repetitive motion injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome.

Workplace accidents are no joke. In 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were nearly three million nonfatal workplace injuries at private employers in the country. And, that doesn't include the more serious accidents that can cost a person his or her life.

We're going to look more closely at what is meant by **workplace accident**, how **hazards** and **risks** differ, and the consequences of these events on the job.

Hazards are things that can potentially cause damage or health consequences to workers. That means even something as simple as a computer could be considered a hazard; after all, repetitive motion injuries like carpal tunnel come from prolonged computer usage.

Other hazards could be knives, wet floors, even bullying behaviors. Think about hazards as categories. They could be biological (bacteria or animal excrement, for example), chemical, ergonomic (poor workstation setup), physical, emotional (bullying or extreme stress), and safety-related.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

The workplace can be dangerous, even more so in an industrial environment. Numerous factors can cause accidents, ranging from overexertion to mishandling of hazardous materials. There are also a multitude of variables that can contribute to or influence a workplace incident. Following are eight of the most common causes of accidents in the workplace:

Lifting

Many employees are prone to sprain, strain or tear a muscle by virtue of lifting an object that is too heavy for them to lift on their own. Keep in mind that

there is no harm in asking for help with objects that are difficult to lift.

Fatigue

Failing to take a break is another common cause of accidents. In order to recover from grueling manual labor, it is essential that employees take adequate breaks. Not doing so can lead to a slew of physical issues, including atrophy and general exhaustion. The results of either of these can be far more devastating than taking a 10-minute breather.

Dehydration

Not staying hydrated can also bring about disastrous consequences. On exceptionally hot summer days, failing to drink adequate amounts of water can cause heat stroke or cardiac conditions. This can be avoided by simply drinking at least eight glasses of water per day. Management should stress the importance of proper hydration and rest, as it maximizes the efforts of personnel.

Poor Lighting

Inadequate lighting is responsible for a number of accidents each year. This is often overlooked when attempting to prevent accidents in the warehouse or workplace.

Hazardous Materials

Improper handling of hazardous materials or not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) is another common cause of accidents in the workplace. By reading material safety data sheets and providing the appropriate protective attire, many workplace incidents can be avoided.

Acts of Workplace Violence

Sadly, violence among co-workers has become all too common. It is usually brought about by office politics or other sensitive issues. Integrating conflict resolution and peer mediation can help to reduce the risks of such outbursts.

Trips and Falls

Slick floors and high-traffic corridors can cause a trip or fall. Improper footwear may also contribute to these accidents, which not only can result in injuries but also workman’s compensation-related cases.

Stress

Stress is one of the leading causes of death. It affects the human body in every facet imaginable. Stress can foster negative effects physiologically, emotionally and mentally, as well as debilitate or distract any worker. Therefore, it is essential to encourage a supportive team environment.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

While accidents in the workplace are common, most are preventable.

Every employer has a legal responsibility to protect their employees. On the other hand, every worker needs to be alert, cautious, and always maintain safety

practices. *Both* employees and employers have a responsibility to stay alert to the potential causes of accidents.

Health and safety are the responsibility of everyone in an organization. This may seem tough, but for employers the payoffs are huge: increased productivity of workers, increased bottom line, and greater consumer confidence.

Here are 5 ways that employers can (and should) help prevent accidents at the workplace:

1. Post safety guidelines

Posting safety guidelines is one of the easiest ways to keep your workers safe and aware of safety practices. Post the safety guidelines on your company's walls and boards. Make them visible and easy to read. You should also set a safety program that every employee can follow (including you).

2. Provide proper security equipment

Providing your employees with proper personal protective equipment (PPE) helps to reduce accidents. Equipment such as protective eyewear, safety gloves, and secured shelving units are essential. The equipment makes it easy for employees to handle bulky and heavy loads and reduces their chances of getting injured.

3. Keep the workplace tidy

A tidy and well-organized working environment will rarely produce accidents. On the other hand, a messy environment is unsafe for you and your employees. For example, unattended water spillage can result in a slip and fall accident. Similarly, if your shelves aren't well secured, they may fall on your employees, resulting in serious injuries such as broken bones or head trauma. Ensuring your workplace is organized and clean all the times can go a long way in preventing accidents.

4. Eliminate shortcuts

Sometimes, shortcuts can be lifesavers, especially on a tight deadline. However, they can also be dangerous and result in a serious injury. Don't allow your employees to use shortcuts when it comes to safety. Instead, it's better they follow the safety guidelines and instructions to do the job right. If they cannot finish a specific job before the day ends, allow them to complete the job the next day. A person's health and safety is always more important than missing a deadline.

5. Conduct emergency drills

Emergency drills are an important tool for ensuring the safety of your staff. Safety drills help employees to learn how to handle emergencies without confusion and uncertainties. For example, in case of a fire, your employees should know how to move in an orderly fashion towards the nearest fire exits. Ensure everybody participates and pays attention to the drills (you included).

Workplace hazards can crop up at any time. While sometimes they may be

unavoidable, you can take steps now to protect your employees, yourself and your business from such tragedies. You must ensure safety measures is a priority in your organization so that you and your employees can enjoy good health, job productivity, and satisfaction.

Accidents are unplanned occurrences that result in injuries, illness, death, and loss of property and/or production. While there is no way to completely eliminate accidents, there are certain plans, preparations, and actions that can be taken to reduce them.

Know the Hazards

- Be aware of surroundings. Look around and identify workplace hazards that could cause harm.
- Look for ways to reduce or eliminate hazards, and implement them.
- Report unsafe areas or practices.
- Dress for the weather.
- Use the EHS Job Hazard Analysis tools to identify hazards associated with job types.

Create a Safe Work Area

- Keep an orderly workplace. Poor housekeeping can cause serious health and safety hazards. The layout of the workplace should have adequate egress routes and be free of debris.
- Inspect vehicles before and after use. DRIVE SAFELY.
- Continually cultivate a safety standard.
- Take breaks and move around regularly throughout the day. Small breaks (standing up and moving around) can make a big difference in combating the dangers of staying in a static position all day long.
- Pay attention to workstation ergonomics.

Use Safe Lifting Techniques

- Follow the following safe lifting practices:
- Lift from a position of power
- Keep the load close
- Use a staggered stance
- Don’t twist while lifting
- Training in body mechanics can reduce strain injuries and keep employees safe during lifting and moving.

Personal Protective Equipment

- The proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can dramatically reduce the risk of injury. Examples of PPE include gear such as earplugs, hard hats, safety goggles, gloves, air-purifying respirators and safety shoes.

Regular Communication

- Notify supervisors about safety hazards.
- Speak up and be involved in safety planning.
- Continually cultivate a safety standard.

Education and Training

- Ensure everyone has the proper safety training relating to the hazards of the job.
- Take advantage of Environmental Health and Safety online training
- It is each employee’s responsibility to take an active role in maintaining safety.

FINAL WORD

When an accident first occurs, report it immediately no matter how trivial because it indicates a hazard that should be addressed.