Airplane Propeller Claims Life



A worker in the air transport industry was riding as a passenger in a ground service vehicle. The driver parked the vehicle parallel to a stationary twin-engine airplane which still had both engines running. The worker dismounted from the service vehicle and reached for a chocking block for the wheels of the aircraft.

Proceeding diagonally from the service vehicle towards the nose of the aircraft, he crossed the path of a rotating propeller. The worker died of massive blood loss caused by amputation of an upper limb and numerous other lacerations.

Granted, not many of us have the opportunity to work around airplanes, but this dreadful incident carries a safety lesson which applies to all work situations. The victim was new and his training had consisted of an hour of orientation and another hour observing a crew at work. On the day he died he had the equivalent of about 18 days experience in the air transport industry. The employees' handbook, which could have provided vital safety information and specific ground handling procedures, was in the process of being written. Moreover, the young man in question seemed totally unaware of the very real dangers of his new job.

Any time you work around machinery or equipment, you must remain alert to the potential for injury. Engines may start or stop unexpectedly. Conditions can change suddenly. You must remain alert to what you are doing and where you are going. If you are unsure about any procedure or policy – find out about them. If you are requested to perform a task which you think is unsafe – check with your supervisor. You must take responsibility for your own safety.