Are You Too Tough to Work Safely?



Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

It's a great thing to be courageous and to have nerves of steel. There are many important tasks that would never get done if it weren't for those who were brave enough and tough enough to tackle them. But there is a fine line between being brave and being dangerous.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Many injuries and fatalities have occurred in all kinds of industries simply because someone overstepped these boundaries. They were just too proud to take advantage of using the correct safety procedures and protective equipment.

Example

An experienced mine worker and his partner were moving a heavy piece of equipment from a lower mine level to the surface by slinging it beneath a hoist cage in a mine shaft.

Partway through the move, they noticed a section of the equipment was loose. Instead of lowering the equipment back to their level, the victim placed a wooden ladder across the center of the mine shaft so he could secure the equipment. Just as he was climbing it, the equipment broke in two, striking the ladder and breaking it. The victim fell nearly 300 feet to the bottom of the mine shaft. He died of a broken neck.

A number of substandard practices contributed to this accident; a lack of adequate help, the use of a makeshift scaffold and no safety lines, to name a few.

But the authority investigating this case said that he doubted the deceased would have made use of a safety line even if it had been available. In the opinion of this coroner, the general attitude of the crew was that safety lines were a sign of weakness, unnecessary and even dangerous. Evidence was presented to the investigators that many miners at this site frequently failed to use safety lines although the rules and obvious benefits about using them were well

known.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Any worker who considers himself too tough to wear gloves, safety footwear or even eye protection is usually unaware of the real consequences. The same goes for any worker who is too proud to get help lifting a heavy load or to seek proper first aid for an injury.

There are a number of situations where a person’s pride or ego might prevent him or her from working safely.

Here are a few:

- A summer student doesn’t want to be considered a wimp, so to prove he’s not afraid of heights, he stands on the top rung of a ladder and falls to his death.
- A maintenance welder doesn’t want to risk losing his new job so he doesn’t question the inadequate instructions from his boss on how to do the job safely, and in turn gets injured by a moving conveyor.
- A woman who has just been transferred to a new department is challenged by a co-worker about her ability to keep up. She wants to be accepted as part of the team, so she attempts to lift a load that’s too heavy for one person to lift and is never able to do this kind of work again.
- A long-time employee returns to equipment that he hasn’t operated for years. He refuses to realize his limitations, but age has a way of catching up with everyone. He isn’t as fast or agile as he once was and, as a result of his poor reflexes, a co-worker is fatally crushed.

FINAL WORD

There’s nothing wrong with being strong or confident and even courageous. But don’t let a tough attitude or misplaced pride lead to accidents. Always use the recommended safe procedures and the personal protective equipment required for your job.