Leave Horsing Around to the Jockeys



If you want to horse around, join the equestrian team or the jockey club, but don’t take part in horseplay at work.

Your job is hazardous enough without having to deal with pranks and other hijinks that can turn deadly in an instant. One former paramedic didn’t realize just how deadly until his co-worker died after a stunt he pulled in Virginia; he used a cardiac defibrillator to zap his colleague as a joke. But it wasn’t funny when she suffered cardiac arrest. The prankster was sentenced to a year in jail. The victim of his moment of fun was a 23-year-old single mom.

The trouble with horseplay

Workers never anticipate the worst-case scenario when they pull a prank or set somebody up for a “harmless” joke. They just think of the laughs it will provide. But the consequences can quickly lead to tragedy, and there’s no turning back the clock.

For example, there was no going back for an automobile mechanic who wanted to teach a co-worker a lesson. He poured antifreeze into a bottle of cola that his co-worker was drinking from. The mechanic expected his colleague to spit it out, but the man guzzled it down and became ill. The co-worker later suffered blindness, deafness and permanent kidney damage.

There’s no excuse

Being bored or stressed out at work is no excuse to play a practical joke on someone. While you may be tempted to fill a co-worker’s shoe with grease, something unexpected could happen, such as him slipping on the floor after taking his foot out of the shoe.

Speaking of shoes, the old match-in the-sole gag really happened at one workplace. An employee put a match in the sole of a colleague’s shoe; but the match set the victim’s oil-soaked coveralls on fire. He died from third degree burns.

Lock horseplay in the stable

Horseplay doesn’t belong in any workplace. Here’s what you can do to prevent it:

1. Don’t give the prankster an audience.
2. Don’t participate in hijinks.
3. Look past the humor and recognize the hazard.
4. Report horseplay to your supervisor. It’s not “ratting someone out” if you might save a life.
5. Discourage fellow workers from acting up on the job.
6. Don’t make yourself wish you could turn back the clock on a prank gone bad, because you can’t.