No Room For Rough Play

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We’re all grownups around here, right? Everyone has a job to do and every job is taken seriously. There’s room for humor, but nobody ever gets hurt, physically or emotionally.

Right?

Well, maybe in a perfect world. In our world, however, rough-housing or playing practical jokes can have tragic consequences for workers and even for members of the public.

At the very least, workplace pranks are the product of someone who is not focused on the job at hand. And let’s face it, horseplay distracts people from working safely. Workers not paying attention to the job or surrounding environment create a dangerous situation in which injuries can occur. Also, pranks often involve electricity, compressed air, chemical reactions or dangerous driving – all of which can have fatal consequences.

One reason that horseplay persists is that it makes for a good story – the kind that gets funnier with each telling until it becomes a legend. It’ s always the funny stories that get the most play. Tragic ones, where the joke went wrong, aren’ t quite as amusing. Gag stories also rarely recognize the embarrassment and humiliation suffered by the victim. Sure, everybody is sorry if a practical joke causes an injury or death, but by then it’ ’s far too late.

Most practical jokes aren’ t funny. Take the guy who thought it would be hilarious to sneak up on a friend, give him a quick blast on the neck with an air hose, and watch his reaction. The reaction was quicker than expected. When the air hit the man, he jerked around instantly. The blast entered his ear, broke the drum and ruined his hearing.

Practical jokes are not innocent fun. Some states criminally prosecute the

practical joker who causes injury or death, ruling that the consequences are not the result of an accident, but of a deliberate act.

Horseplay is no safer in the workplace than it is anywhere else. You probably don’t have to look far to find examples of fun and games that got carried away — good reasons why practical jokers shouldn’t be welcome on the job, and neither should anyone who encourages them.

The next time you’re tempted to play a joke on someone, don’t. Stop and think before you act. And don’t hesitate to report a co-worker who still doesn’t get it: Any kind of horseplay is dangerous.