When Confidence Becomes Carelessness



Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE
It's easy to get overly confident once you've mastered something. Think back to your childhood when you mastered riding your bike with no hands. That worked great—until you rode over a pothole you hadn't seen and ended up with major road rash. Workers who take the "no hands" approach to their jobs can end up seriously injured, or worse.

WHAT'S THE DANGER
Experienced workers have paid dearly for carelessness. They have been electrocuted because they failed to lock out the power when doing electrical repairs. They have been burned in explosions when they allowed an ignition source in a flammable atmosphere. They have been killed in falls from heights when they failed to hook up fall arrest gear. They have lost limbs while operating the same saws or punch presses they have used for years. They have been disabled in vehicle crashes while driving familiar routes.

EXAMPLE
An experienced process industry worker disobeyed safety regulations and entered a nitrogen tank without adequate protection. He collapsed from a lack of oxygen and died before he could be rescued.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Even though you're an experienced worker, you can still become entangled in the conveyor if you wear loose clothing. The kiln is just as hot as it's always been and wet floors still are slippery.

No matter how long you have been on the job and no matter how skilled you are, you must remember the basic safety precautions. Don't get complacent!

Here are some examples of complacency:

- Going on auto-pilot and letting your mind wander while working.
- Trying to do too many things at once and taking shortcuts.
- Fooling around or showing off.
- Letting anger, personal problems or frustration interfere with work.

- Working on too little sleep.
- Taking the attitude that safety is someone else’s job.
- Performing a task without using the recommended personal protective equipment.

How do you avoid overconfidence when it comes to safety matters? Here are some suggestions:

- Stay aware of the hazards. Remain alert and focus on doing the job safely.
- Follow the recommended safe work practices at all times. Do not take short cuts.
- Wear your personal protective equipment – every time.
- Take the time to inspect your equipment and report any defective equipment to your supervisor.
- Take the time to clean up your work space and ensure that traffic areas are clear of debris and obstacles.
- Pay attention during safety meetings. You may have heard it all before, but a reminder never hurts.
- Take advantage of any opportunities to upgrade your safety training. This will make you aware of new information about hazards and new ways to protect yourself.

FINAL WORD

As an experienced worker, you have a responsibility to set a good example for newcomers. Do things the safe way, because someone may be watching and learning from you. Never let overconfidence compromise your safety or the safety of someone else.