

“Why Prevent Accidents?”

Why is it so important to prevent accidents? Do you view accident prevention simply a way to avoid getting hurt? Do you work safely just because you want to? Perhaps you view accident prevention as a way of keeping your organization or your supervisor off your back. Maybe you just do it because you have been told to.

Of course there are many reasons that an organization wants its employees to work safely. But every one must have a more important reason to work safely than just because the organization says so. They must have a personal reason. Your reason may be your family. What would they do if you were to get hurt? How about your hobbies? Would you still be able to enjoy them with a serious disability?

What you do for a living is nothing more than a means towards a goal that you have set for yourself. That goal may be the education of your children. You may plan to buy a home or a car. Maybe you want to get married after you have saved up enough money. Maybe your goal for now is just to make it to Friday night and going out on the town. Whatever your goals may be, they all generally tie back in some way to what you do for a living. And what you do for a living could be seriously derailed by an accident. All your goals can go up in smoke if you are injured and disabled.

A safety program is designed to help you reach your goals. It is not there just to make your work harder, or slower, or to meet some governmental guidelines. Safety and accident prevention programs are designed to **PROTECT YOU** so that you may reach your personal goals. When an unsafe act is pointed out to you, it is done so to help you by eliminating obstacles or job hindrances **AND** to insure that you get home all in one piece.

What is it about people, an office, or a work scenario that causes accidents? The U.S. Census Bureau reported in the year 2000 that the following general categories of causes resulted in fatal work injuries:

- **Transportation - 43%**
- **Assaults & violent acts - 16%**
- **Contacts with objects - 17%**
- **Falls - 12%**
- **Exposure to harmful substances or environment - 8%**
- **Fires - 3%**
- **Other - 1%**

Keep in mind that according to various studies up to 95% of all accidents are caused by the unsafe acts of the individual injured or the unsafe acts of a co-worker.

One way in which employees, supervisors, and management can proactively identify and eliminate or control accident potential is to talk to and observe subordinates.

Ask the following questions:

- Who will have the next accident and why?
- Where or at what location will the accident occur and why?
- How will the accident happen and why?
- What task, job or process will not be accomplished when the accident occurs and why?

When you ask these questions of other people or yourself, you will find that we already have a good idea of who is likely to be the next accident victim, where it will occur, how it will happen, and what task is involved when the accident occurs.

Preparing for an accident requires that the entity have four things in place: planning, attitude, supplies, and communications.

Planning Ahead

The entity will never know in advance what accidents will occur or when, but it can plan ahead to know what the most likely risks are in a given situation to prepare for and, hopefully, avoid them.

Having specific plans in place for various types of accidents and regularly training employees to work within those plans is one of the most effective means of ensuring that accidents will be avoided when possible and handled appropriately when they do occur.

Attitude of Safety

In addition to planning for accidents and responding to them, instilling an attitude of safety among employees reduces the risk of having accidents occur. Workplace safety training instructs workers on best practices and helps avoid common mishaps. Policies and procedures should also reflect that safety is a priority within the public entity. If employees are encouraged to cut corners to reduce costs or get a job done more quickly, the attitude of safety is undermined and an accident is more likely to occur.

The Right Supplies

An important part of preparing for an accident is having the right supplies available if an accident does occur. Minor accidents can become major ones if the entity does not keep basic emergency first aid kits and other job-specific emergency medical supplies on hand at all times. Accident preparation and response training for public employees should include training on the proper use of emergency equipment. Depending on the nature of the entity, the work done, and the proximity to medical facilities, the entity may need to provide first aid and CPR training for some or all employees.

Emergency Contacts for Communication

Another essential component of preparing for an accident is having emergency contact information and communication plans in place. During training, employees should be told who to contact and how to contact the person in case of an accident. In the case of an auto or other offsite accident, the employee may need to call 911 or other emergency response professionals first and then contact the entity designee regarding the accident.

Every time you approach a project, every time you pick up a tool, every time you start a piece of equipment or machinery, think and act SAFELY. Look for what can go wrong and eliminate that possibility BEFORE your goals come to an abrupt end.

TAKE SAFETY PERSONALLY: MAKE IT A PART OF YOUR LIFE GOALS.

THINK SAFETY & ACT SAFELY!