



Daily Safety Focus – January

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WHY PREVENT ACCIDENTS?

January 1

ACCIDENT PREVENTION: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU

Why is it so important to prevent accidents? Do you view accident prevention as 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 company happy or your supervisor off your back. Maybe you just do it because you have been told to.

Of course there are many reasons that a company wants its employees to work safely. But every one must have a more important reason to work safely than just because the company 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.

Every time you approach a project, every time you pick up a tool, every time you start a piece of equipment or machinery, think SAFETY. 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.

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THE SILENT KILLER

January 4

Most of us know that carbon monoxide gas (CO) is present in engine exhaust, and we have enough sense not to let an engine run in a closed garage. But safety experts have suspected for years that carbon monoxide contributes to many more vehicle accidents that we're able to prove. This insidious gas is colorless, odorless, tasteless and non-irritating. It can kill without ever being detected by the senses. When you smell exhaust fumes, you aren't smelling the carbon monoxide - you're smelling unburned hydrocarbons.

Here are some points to help you keep the silent killer from making you one of its victims:

1. Be sure all parts of the manifold, exhaust pipe and muffler are sealed against leaks.
2. Keep your engine properly tuned so that combustion will be as complete as possible.
3. Before starting your engine, open the garage doors wide or, if you have an exhaust venting system, be sure it's operating.
4. Never crawl under your vehicle while the engine is running. (There are many other good reasons for this.)
5. Never drive without a fresh air supply coming into your vehicle.
6. Avoid following other vehicles too closely, their exhaust contain carbon monoxide that can be drawn into your vehicle.
7. If you feel a little sleepy while driving, or feel a tightness across your forehead, or get a headache, or your temples start throbbing, you may be inhaling some carbon monoxide. Other signs while driving at night are that the oncoming lights seem brighter and more glaring than usual and you're slower in recovering your vision from the glare, or that the darkness seems blacker than usual. If you notice any of these signs, stop at once, get out and walk about in the open air, and the drive the windows open.

Carbon monoxide can slow down your brain and your reflexes, dim your vision and lead you into an accident. During the cooler months we're more apt to drive with all the windows closed. Always have some fresh air coming in. The oxygen in fresh air is what you need more than anything else to offset the carbon monoxide.

Most people don't realize how little carbon monoxide it takes to be poisonous to the human body. Only 50 parts of CO per million parts of air, by volume, is considered dangerous. And there have been cases where that much of the deadly gas has been found in underpasses on city street.

Carbon monoxide doesn't suffocate you, it kills you by chemical action. It's an asphyxiate. It combines directly with the blood in your body so the blood can't carry oxygen to the tissues. In a sense, you die from oxygen starvation. So, if you have carbon monoxide, get some fresh air or pure oxygen as fast as you can.

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THOUGHTS TO START THE WORK DAY

January 5

Do you realize how important your safety is to you and to your family? Are you "on the alert" every minute of the day . . . to the dangers of using unsafe procedures? Many safe procedures have been designed to protect you on the job. These safe procedures are vital to you . . for you are up against a tough enemy who has an arsenal of missiles to launch against one of your most vulnerable targets . . . your hands. **SAFE PROCEDURES PROTECT HANDS** against injury's missiles, such as sharp edges . . . improperly conditioned hand tools, improperly handled material and other pinch points.

Be on guard every minute of the day. Failure to observe just one safe procedure . . . just one time . . . can cause injury to those vulnerable "tools" . . . **YOUR HANDS.**

If you have learned the safety know-how of your job and learned it well it will be easy for you to catch anything some other fellow does that isn't as safe as it should be. If you see it and don't say anything and he gets hurt, aren't you partly to blame? Think it over.

Keeping an eye out for the other fellow's safety can help you too . . . a lot, sometimes. We all make mistakes. We slip up once in a while. After all, we're only human. But if each of us is keeping the other fellow's safety in mind, and he is doing the same for us, he's likely to catch our slips or at least the serious ones. You help him, he helps you. One hand washes the other. Believe me, it pays.

How are you fixed for safety? . . . Have you enough left to last until the next hazard comes along? Be sure before you answer. Buying safety is pretty much the same process as buying anything. Most employees buy it. Some buy more than others. Big buyers, naturally, are less likely to be injured on the job. They are also less likely to injure someone else. The question isn't always how much safety does an employee **WANT**, but rather, how much safety does he **NEED** . . . How are you fixed for safety?

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WE KNOW BETTER

January 6

Most of us have the necessary knowledge and experience to do our jobs and most of don't want to hurt ourselves or others.

Why, then, do we often ignore our good friend "common sense" and set ourselves or others up for an accidental injury? 1. Carbon monoxide can ill - but we sometimes work in a closed garage with our automobile engine running!

2. A bump on the head hurts - but we don't think about that for a minute when we walk under an overhead load!

3. A circular saw can cut off a finger - but we go right ahead and operate a saw without a guard!

4. There is a safe way to climb a ladder, which we use here at work - but we take a chance and fall from a ladder while painting our house!

5. Excessive speed in an automobile may cause an accident - but we try it anyhow and wrap the family car around a tree!

6. Radioactive fallout is dangerous - but we think nothing about leaving household poisons around where kids can get at them!

7. It is dangerous for children to run out in front of cars - but we drag them across the street on the red light!

8. It is important for teenagers to learn safe driving habits - but we violate a traffic law with our teenage son or daughter right in the car with us!

9. A loose board on a stairway can trip someone - but we don't bother to report it!

10. Grease and oil spills can cause a nasty fall - but we "forget" that we should cover these spills with oil absorbent material!

11. Tools and parts can become falling objects or we can trip over them - but we fail to put them back where they belong!

12. We know an unsafe condition when we see one - but we pay no attention to material or trucks in the aisles!

13. We know an unsafe act when we see one - but we oil, adjust, or try to fix a machine without even bothering to stop it!

14. We shouldn't take a chance when operating equipment - but we drive a forklift truck with the load carried high and try to turn a corner while going too fast!

15. We can't fool safety devices - be we remove or fasten a machine guard so it won't give us the protection we need!

16. It is dangerous for us to block fire-fighting equipment - but we pile boxes and cartons in front of fire extinguishers and store material right up to the underside of sprinklers.

17. We should wear protective equipment - but we wear our goggles around our neck and leave our hard hat in our locker, our car, or on the shelf while at work.

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18. Horseplay causes a lot of injuries - but we blast Gus with an air hose just for the heck of it.

I realize that we all know better and I'm sure that most of you aren't guilty of doing the many things that I have covered. But you'll have to admit that some of these things are a possibility, even for each of us with all our knowledge of the safe way of doing things.

Yes, we know better! But, since knowing is only half the job, we must act on our knowledge to be safe.

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ACCEPT IT - IT'S YOURS

January 7

Accident prevention is the responsibility of everyone. You've heard that statement probably more times that you can remember. But it is a fact.

Safety responsibility has to be the responsibility of each and every one of us. No one man or department can constantly watch, guide or instruct every operation that is going on throughout a company each day.

Top management is vitally concerned with your safety. So are your department heads, the safety supervisors and foreman. However, these people can't be with you every minute on every job, and you have to accept your own responsibility for safety.

It's not such an overwhelming task. You should know how to do your job safely. The training that you have received, the departmental work procedures, the safety rule book and the use of everyday common sense will prevent you from being involved in an accident.

Don't be ashamed to ask questions about a job assigned to you. A workman trying to bluff his way through a job he doesn't understand is just asking for trouble. Even if you think you know the correct procedures, a review may bring out an important phase of the job that has slipped your mind. At the same time, your questions and the answers you get may be helping a new or less experienced man on the job who is too bashful to ask questions.

But your responsibility for accident prevention doesn't stop with the job. At home, behind the wheel, at play, you've got to keep your safety guard up. Not just for your own safety of others as well.

Face your safety responsibility as you do the other obligations that make up your daily life and each day will be completed without untimely accident or injury

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LAST TO GO

January 8

Man is gifted with a number of abilities. Some of them are known as senses. Man is able to see, hear, smell, feel or touch, and he can taste. These are the well-known five senses. Sometimes we talk of a sixth sense . . . that of perception or intuition. Some people have a remarkable sense of perception or uncanny intuition. In some people, one of the senses is more highly developed than the others. For example, a handicapped person very often overdevelops one sense in order to compensate for another that has been lost. Many a blind person has a super sense of hearing or touch. Considering how dependent you are upon all your sense - what sense, if you had to, would you be willing to give up?

Let's take a hypothetical situation. For some reason or other, you have to part with one of your senses. The choice would be yours. Most people would probably vote to give up the sense of touch. While very difficult to live without, a loss of the sense of touch might not pose the problems that the loss of one of the other sense could cause. Probably the next to go would be smell. In some people's book, this might be the first to go. Others might rank the sense of taste as less important than the sense of smell. Some would want to retain the sense of taste over the sense of smell, even though some experts tell us that the taste buds do not work accurately when the sense of smell is not present. The last two senses to be given up in anyone's book would be the sense of hearing and the sense of sight. While no one would like to be deaf, he would rather be deaf than blind. It would be the last to go on any imagined or hypothetical list. But consider this: Why is it that workmen take so many chances with their most precious sense? Every day people are blinded or suffer serious eye injuries because of failure to wear protective eye equipment. It is almost as if the sense of sight was considered the least valued on the list . . . instead of the last to go.

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DEFENSIVE DRIVING

January 9

While a good offense may be the best defense in football, this doesn't hold true in driving. A professional driver is a top defensive driver! He seems to have eyes (or mirrors) in the back of his head!! He stays out of the other fellow's way.

The Professional Driver:

1. Knows and obeys the company rules for the operation of his vehicle.
2. Knows and obeys the traffic rules and regulations applicable to the area in which he is driving.
3. Is aware of the traffic situations far ahead on both sides and to the rear of his vehicle.
4. Is constantly alert to illegal acts and errors of others.
5. Is willing to yield the right-of-way to prevent accidents and does not tail-gate.
6. He is particularly cautious approaching intersections. He lessens the odds of an accident by taking his foot off the gas and putting it on the brake to shorten his reaction time for stopping.
7. Knows and adjusts his driving to the special hazards of: (a) pedestrians (b) the road (c) weather (d) traffic (e) degree of light and (f) the added dangers brought on by his own emotions such as anger and worry.
8. Requires an ATTITUDE of confidence that he can drive without ever having an accident. He is POSITIVE about accident prevention.
9. He drives as though every child in the street is his own and every motorist is a dear relative or friend. He know the secret of safe driving: DO IT THE SAFE WAY EVERY TIME.

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Driving Safely in Winter Weather

January 10

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. Many accidents could be avoided if drivers took time to learn and practice these tips for driving safely during snowy and icy conditions.

Perhaps the deadliest danger of all is "black ice." Black ice is ice which forms on a roadway, usually due to snow melting and re-freezing. Since it is almost invisible, drivers fail to recognize black ice conditions and may drive at normal speeds-often resulting in very serious accidents. Always be alert to the possibility of black ice when temperatures are near or below freezing. Pavement that looks dry but appears darker in color and dull-looking should alert you to the presence of black ice.

Failing to allow yourself enough time to stop is a major cause of winter driving accidents. During slippery conditions stopping distances can triple. Driving at a slower speed, anticipating stops at traffic lights and intersections, and applying brakes sooner than normal will help ensure accident-free stops. When braking, brake carefully with short, rapid application of the brakes. Always allow plenty of extra space between you and other vehicles to minimize the need for quick stops.

Acceleration, turning, and passing also present dangers during winter. Accelerate slowly to avoid loss of traction and subsequent loss of control. Turn slowly, with caution, to avoid sliding into a stationary object or the path of an oncoming vehicle. Avoid sudden movements. Pass with care because passing lanes are not maintained as well as driving lanes. Again, leave extra space between yourself and other vehicles so there's room to maneuver in case something goes wrong. During a skid, steer cautiously in the direction you want the car to go.

Here are some other tips you should remember for driving safely in winter:

- Always use your seatbelt.
- Turn on your headlights during adverse weather conditions. Overcast skies and falling snow limit visibility. It is important to see and be seen.
- Like all the signs say, bridges and overpasses freeze before the roadway. Use extra caution on these.
- Remember that driving in winter weather conditions causes physical and mental fatigue and reduces reaction times. Get plenty of rest and adequate nutrition. Don't drive while you're sleepy or on medication that causes drowsiness.
- Prepare your vehicle well ahead of time. Check fluid levels, tire pressure, lights, and the battery. Have a mechanic give your vehicle a winter check-up and make any necessary repairs.
- Stock an emergency kit containing heavy clothes and a blanket, traction material such as sand or kitty litter, tire chains, a small shovel, first aid kit, flashlight, jumper cables, and a bright cloth to use as a flag.

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Driving Safely in Traffic

January 11

When you are driving in traffic, what are some things you must do to avoid accidents? Avoiding accidents in traffic is a little different than avoiding accidents on the open road. Long-distance drivers know that fatigue is responsible for numerous accidents. But what causes accidents when you are driving around town, making frequent stops? This week's Safety Topic discusses some of the causes of these accidents and what you can do to prevent them.

Many people spend a lot of time on the road as they are working. On any city street you are likely to see delivery vans, couriers, salespeople, and utility persons making frequent stops as they conduct their business. Some people spend many hours in traffic just going to and from work. Even though the mileage may be small, the amount of time spent on the road is very long. Every hour spent on the road increases your chance of having an accident.

Certainly **speed** is a factor in accidents. Many accidents happen simply because the driver is going too fast. City streets usually have speed limits of less than 25 miles per hour, and often you will see posted limits as low as 5 or 10 miles per hour. Speed limits are carefully selected to minimize the chances of accidents. When traffic is heavy, there just isn't very much distance between you and the next vehicle to stop. The slower you're going, the less distance it will take to stop. By going slowly, you will also be able to observe your surroundings more easily, taking note of cyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicles. Observing the speed limit is one sure way to reduce your chance of an accident. On rainy, foggy, or snowy days keep your speed even lower.

When you make stops, park your vehicle carefully. Avoid leaving it in a space that's likely to block traffic or create a blind spot. As you exit the vehicle look both ways before stepping into the road or onto the sidewalk. You'll want to avoid collisions with other vehicles as well as bicycles and passerby. If you must load things into or out of your vehicle, be sure your load does not obstruct your vision. It is better to make several trips with smaller loads than to overload yourself to the point you cannot see other vehicles. It will also help prevent tripping and falling over objects in your path.

Perhaps the main cause of accidents in traffic is a simple matter of **not paying attention**. In traffic, it is easy to become distracted, frustrated, and annoyed. Any of these can cause you to pay less attention than you should, often resulting in rear-end collisions when the vehicle in front of you stops. Running stop lights and stop signs is also a possibility if you are not paying attention.

Sometimes **paying attention to the wrong things** causes accidents, too. Reading addresses on buildings, street signs, and maps while driving can lead to accidents. You will be better off if you find a place to pull over safely while you read signs and addresses. Even better, try to pinpoint the exact location when you plan your trip--before you begin driving.

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Fatigue is also a contributor to traffic accidents. After a long day's work, or perhaps a morning when you didn't rest well the night before, you are likely to feel tired. Feeling tired causes you to become distracted easily and also slows your reflexes. Don't take chances driving when you feel too tired to be safe. If fatigue is a frequent problem, see your doctor. For occasional fatigue, combat it with adequate rest, nutrition, and exercise.

To drive safely in traffic you must keep your speed down, pay attention, and avoid driving when you are tired. Many accidents and injuries could be prevented by following these precautions. Next time you're in traffic, remember these things and keep yourself safe!

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Prevent Cold Stress Injuries

January 12

Winter weather is just around the corner, but did you know cold stress, or "hypothermia," can occur any time of year? In fact, most cases of cold stress or hypothermia develop in air temperatures between 30 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit. People who are exposed to lower temperatures are at risk for injuries ranging from frostbite to serious loss of body heat which could result in brain damage or death. This week's Safety Topic discusses what you can do to protect yourself from cold stress, hypothermia and frost bite injuries.

Dress warmly, in layers. Preserving an air space between the body and the outer layer of clothing will help retain body heat. Choose fabrics such as cotton or wool which insulate but also allow sweat to evaporate. It is especially important to protect the feet, hands, head, and face. These parts of the body are farthest from the heart and are the hardest to keep warm. Almost half your body heat can be lost through the head, so cover it up as well.

Keep dry. Wetness greatly increases the chance of hypothermia. Always have extra clothing available if there's a chance you could get wet. Keep your feet dry, they are very susceptible to frostbite.

Take a break. You may think it's wise to keep on working in cold temperatures. After all, working makes you break a sweat and you feel warmer. But if you become fatigued during physical activity, your body loses its ability to properly retain heat. This causes rapid cooling which can quickly lead to hypothermia. When you take a break, be sure to replace lost fluids and calories by drinking warm, sweet, caffeine-free nonalcoholic drinks and soup.

Eat right. A proper diet provides your body with the nutrients it needs to withstand hypothermia. A restrictive diet may deprive your body the ability to work well in cold temperatures.

Don't work alone. In cold-stress prone environments, a buddy system should be used. Look out for one another and be alert for the symptoms of hypothermia and frost bite.

Learn what to look out for. The effects of cold stress may not be apparent to its victim. The first symptoms of hypothermia are uncontrollable shivering and the sensation of cold. The heartbeat slows and may become irregular, and the pulse weakens. As the condition worsens, severe shaking or rigid muscles may be evident. The victim may also have slurred speech, memory lapses, and drowsiness. Cool skin, slow, irregular breathing, and exhaustion occur as the body temperature drops even lower. This is a serious condition requiring immediate medical attention.

Frostbite can occur without accompanying hypothermia. Frostbite occurs when the fluids around the body's tissues freeze. The most vulnerable parts of the body are the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes. Symptoms of frostbite include coldness and tingling in the affected part, followed by numbness; changes in skin color to white or

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grayish-yellow, initial pain which subsides as the condition worsens, and possibly blisters. Frostbite can cause irreversible tissue damage and requires immediate medical attention.

If you work in lower-temperature environments, always be alert for the possibility of cold stress. Follow these guidelines to help protect yourself from injury. Remember, it doesn't have to be freezing for cold stress to occur. Take steps to protect yourself.

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DISTRACTED DRIVING

January 13

Longer commutes, an increase in heavy traffic and bottlenecks, the availability of in-vehicle technology, and a blur between work and personal time are all factors that result in driver distraction. More time on the - roads more traveled - results in less time at home or the office, causing drivers to feel the pressure to multi-task just to keep up with their responsibilities. Countless distractions tempt drivers to forget that their primary responsibility is to **drive focused and stay safe.**

Safety Facts for the Road

Distracted driving is estimated to be a factor in between 25 to 50 percent of all traffic crashes - that's between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes a day (NETS, NHTSA).

Numerous events and activities both inside and outside the vehicle can distract a driver. Adverse road, traffic, and weather conditions require a driver's full attention.

While taking one's eyes off the road or hands off the steering wheel present obvious risks, activities that take a driver's mind away from driving are just as risky.

A driver's ability to manage distractions varies widely and can change from day-to-day depending on their level of stress and fatigue.

Drivers who are distracted fail to recognize potential hazards in the road and react more slowly to traffic conditions, decreasing their "margin of safety".

Research suggests that distracted or inattentive driving increases the risk of rear-end and single-vehicle crashes.

Do you know when you're driving distracted?

Has a passenger in your car screamed or gasped because of something you did or did not do?

Did you run a stop sign unintentionally?

Have you slammed on your brakes because you didn't see the car

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Making Zero Accidents Our Goal

January 14

Imagine a workplace that never had an accident again a workplace where employees never suffered another injury. An impossible dream? Maybe not.

At one company I know, the safety director told the workers that only a zero accident frequency was going to be tolerated. Rather than considering themselves successful if there are only a few accidents, every accident is going to be considered a failure. "It's a matter of attitude," the safety head told them. And, this is what the workers had to say. An office clerk: "The secret to an ongoing zero accident record is personal commitment and communication. It's ultimately everybody's responsibility because safety is personal. Other people can affect your safety as well though. And you can affect someone else's. So we have to look out for one another, too."

A machinist: "The crew members have been here a long time and we know each other. We know that we can take the time to do the job the safe way. Before I came here, I had my eyes injured a number of times using metal machinery. You won't catch me running a machine like that anymore without my safety glasses on. I just won't do it. And I yell at the others to put theirs on."

A welder: "Anybody who does something wrong in the shop gets jumped on by the rest of us. But it's never done maliciously or to downgrade that person. We police one another, not out of spite, but because we care for one another. Everyone needs to be involved in safety. If you exclude someone, they'll get hurt. We also don't hesitate to tell management what to do safetywise. Some people say, with our record, we're due for an accident. We're not due for one. We're never due for one."

A service technician: "Cooperation between management and employees is key. Safety has to be a partnership. We have to have employees who are safety-conscious and that means having employers who are committed. There is no one recipe for success. Safety must be the consciousness of everyone in the company. It helps if everyone gets along and the 'mood' is positive."

A mechanic: "The secret to a good safety record is being aware. You have to think about it every day. And you can't get too confident about what you're doing, because then safety can be side-stepped. I used to think that safety was the responsibility of the company. I've learned that safety is a two-way street the worker has to be involved in safety because it's the worker who ultimately might get hurt. But the worker needs the go-ahead from the top to do the job safely."

These are the actual words of the workers at a company that is aiming for a no-accident goal. The safety director there says, "Everyone has to buy into the idea that our goal is a zero accident frequency before it will have meaning."

We can have a zero-accident goal here, too, if we all put our minds to it and make it a commitment. Why not make a no-accident record your own personal aim? You know your job and you know how to be safe. You know as much as the workers whose words you just heard. Stay safe today, tomorrow, next week, and a week from now. Accidents don't "just happen." They don't have to happen at all.

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It's Our Own Responsibility

January 15

What with all the government safety regulations as well as company policies and procedures, it's easy to forget that safety is primarily a personal responsibility. Workplaces can be covered with warning signs, safety posters, and bulletin boards. Safeguards can be installed on each piece of equipment. We can attend training sessions and be told of safe ways to do work, but none of these things can ensure freedom from accidents unless we want to prevent them. It's up to us!

Unless we realize that our own actions determine whether accidents happen—and until we accept responsibility for these actions—injuries will occur.

Who puts tools and equipment into motion and controls their movements? Who but ourselves can control the placement of our bodies, the movement of our arms, legs, and eyes, and—most important—the activity of our brains?

One's ability to control his or her own actions carries with it the responsibility not to let these actions harm co-workers.

Being Accountable!

Machines do not reach out and bite. Tripping hazards don't grab a person's feet. Hand tools don't slice and jab into flesh by themselves. Yet, judging from the statements people use to describe their injuries, one would think that the tools and equipment they use were alive.

It's apparent that the people who make such statements are not fully aware that they are accountable for their own actions and must accept the responsibility for them. Little can be done to prevent their accidents and injuries until they do accept this responsibility. Many accidents are prevented, it is true, when OSHA standards and the boss's requirements are met. But when each individual employee brings an acceptance of personal responsibility and accountability into the workplace every day, everyone's risk of injury drops dramatically.

Consider a cargo handler who steps into the cab of a tractor, slips, and scrapes a leg against the door—causing a deep cut requiring stitches. Investigation reveals that the nonskid surface on the cab floor was badly worn and slippery.

What caused this accident? An irresponsible individual would lay the blame on the physical condition of the tractor and might ask, "Why wasn't the cab floor reported for repair?" A person who accepts responsibility would have reported it.

Hard luck, the conduct of other people, inadequate tools, and unfavorable conditions are just a few of the favorite reasons immature, irresponsible people use to absolve themselves of personal accountability when things go wrong.

Accepting responsibility for our own actions, on the other hand, is a sign of maturity. It means we believe firmly that it's up to us to do everything we can to prevent accidents. No one else can accept our safety responsibility for us.

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On Your Own Time

January 16

Safety is important not just to you and your family but to your employer as well. It's part of my job to help you to develop a safe attitude, so that safety will become an ingrained part of your job, day in and day out.

But off-the-job safety is important, too. What you do on your own time is your own business, but since we're all part of a team, it's only natural that we're concerned about each other's welfare both on and off the job.

At work, you're part of a safety network that extends into many areas. There are rules and regulations to follow and supervisors who work at keeping the safety program going.

Off the job, though, you're on your own. You can leave safety glasses off when you're remodeling the kitchen, and you can balance a ladder on a box when you're painting the peaks on your house.

You probably wouldn't hear a word out of anyone, but it would take a pretty immature person to deliberately leave safety at work. Still, there are times when we all get a little careless.

The highways are prime areas of concern for safety away from work, since vehicle-related accidents are the prime cause of fatalities, on the job and off—in the home or public place. I won't attempt to go into all the aspects of traffic safety here.

They're emphasized almost everywhere, and we've had training sessions devoted to vehicle safety. But I certainly caution you to cool it on the road. Be patient getting out of the parking lot, and always watch the other driver.

To some degree, most of us are do-it-yourselfers around the home, and this is where a lot of people are injured. Be careful when using a ladder, for example, being sure it's in good condition and you climb safely.

When using tools, pick the right tool for the job. If a tool is in poor condition, don't use it. Most of you have power tools, and you should be sure that they're properly grounded with a three-pronged plug or double insulation. And stay off wet surfaces when using electric power tools.

The weather is something we can't do much about. Yet it affects our safety, so we have to take precautions against it. Don't overexert yourself when shoveling snow, for example—a shovelful can weigh more than you may think. And don't work too long in the hot sun. This can catch up with you fast, particularly if you've worked hard all week at your regular job.

Make Safety a Way of Life



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Off-the-job safety should really be second nature if you practice it in earnest at work. So keep an eye out for hazards whether you're on the golf course, in your boat, or driving your snowmobile.

National statistics show that accidents away from work account for 70 percent of all deaths and 55 percent of all injuries to workers. So the toll in suffering and the loss in manpower runs high away from the job.

You are all valuable employees, and each of you fits into our overall operation and the overall manpower picture in the country. Your contribution to the economy would be difficult to replace if you were injured either on or off the job. Add to this the fact that you're priceless to your family, and it's easy to see why a 24-hour safety effort is necessary.

Make Safety a Way of Life



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Pinch Points

January 17

To most of us a pinch doesn't sound too serious. A pinch on the cheek or a friendly pinch for fun is one thing, but the pinches you get on the job are something else. Recently, a worker was crushed to death against a wall by a huge truck that was backing up. That was a pinch point accident. In another instance, a pair of pliers slipped and pinched a worker's hand, which caused a blood blister.

Between these two extremes lie hundreds of pinch point situations in this industry. And there are just as many examples of injuries sustained because of these pinch points on record.

Pinch point conditions are one of the most difficult hazards to guard. Closely stored 55-gallon steel drums, when moved or handled, create pinch points between each other or the dolly being used to move them. Because the drums are round, they are more difficult to handle and control in many cases. Here the only protection is care and alertness.

The same thing applies to heavy crates, castings, and boxes that are stacked close to each other. It is dangerous to work around machinery that has oscillating or reciprocating parts or elements. Of course, most of these areas are guarded, but in cases when guards are removed to do work or make adjustments, be sure tide parts cannot move or be moved. Tag out or lock out the equipment and be sure the machinery cannot cycle if it is off balance or activated by accident.

There are many commonplace things that are potential pinch points, like heavy steel doors or heavy covers for bins or hoppers, and often there is no way to guard these hazards. Care is your only safeguard. Even extension ladders can create serious pinch points, the rungs sliding past each other can catch fingers, hands, and feet.

A little thought will bring to mind the many pinch points (sometimes called nip points) here in our own operation. Let's take a few minutes to discuss and identify some of them.

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It Can't Happen to You?

January 19

Have you ever heard someone say "It can't happen to me"? Maybe you've even said it yourself.

If we haven't said it out loud, most of us have at least thought it at some time or another. We think it just before we do something that is a little unsafe—or maybe quite a bit unsafe. We know better. We know the safe way to do it. But we take that chance. We are, in fact, saying "I know this could result in an accident, but it can't happen to me."

Why can't it happen to you? What makes you so special? Why take that chance? Sooner or later, the person who keeps saying "It can't happen to me" will wind up saying "If only I had ..."

- "If only I had worn my safety glasses, I wouldn't have lost my eye."
- "If only I had walked instead of run, I wouldn't have tripped and broken my leg."
- "If only I had taken my ring off, I wouldn't have lost my finger on the machine."

The next time you find yourself saying "It can't happen to me," remember that anything can happen to anybody, anytime, if they act in an unsafe manner or are exposed to an unsafe condition.

I'd like to tell you about a few actual work accidents that resulted in injuries and lost time. The people involved are people like you and me—but the difference is that their own personal "It can't happen to me" happened.

- A bartender cut her finger on a broken beer bottle when she reached into the beer cooler.
- An employee was frightened by the noise of a ruptured air line, so she started to run. She tripped and fell, spraining her neck and bruising her head and ankle.
- A police officer, while chasing two suspects, jumped over a low wall on a building under construction. He caught his foot on the wall, fell into a pile of bricks and construction materials, and sprained his leg.
- A janitor strained his back trying to get a power lawn mower he was operating out of some mud it had become stuck in.
- Highly flammable glue was mistakenly applied by an employee to a work surface. When he started his drill, the electrical sparks ignited the glue fumes and burned his hands and face.
- An employee in a restaurant suffered a head injury and knee lacerations when he slipped on a piece of lettuce.
- A cook broke a toe when he opened a freezer door and 10 pounds of frozen ground beef slid out and fell on his foot.
- A bookkeeper received burns to her left arm and side when a coffee urn she was disconnecting tipped over and spilled hot coffee on her.
- A truck driver injured his neck and back when he drove over a bump in the road and hit the top of the truck with his head.
- A truck driver jumped off a loading dock, landed on a soda can, and sprained her ankle.

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- An employee was injured during horseplay in a bakery when someone threw a dough ball and hit him in the eye.
- A stock clerk in a grocery store suffered a fractured rib when cans of soup he was stacking fell over on him.
- An employee injured his leg when he fell while running to the first-aid room to get help for another employee.
- A welder suffered a first-degree burn in her ear canal when she was welding and a hot spark flew into her left ear.
- An employee in an automobile dealership was hit by the car he was working on when he left it running in gear without fully setting the emergency brake. The car ran into him and fractured his leg.

All of us should remember that a person with an "It can't happen to me" attitude is dangerous. He or she may escape injury from unsafe acts or conditions, but may expose those around him or her to injury. So someone acting in an unsafe manner needs to be told about it. An unsafe condition needs to be reported. But don't leave the telling and reporting to somebody else. Take those necessary actions yourself. After all, safety is everybody's business.

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Golden Rule for Safety

January 20

Nearly everyone has heard of the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Many different religions and philosophies have a similar way of expressing this rule, yet very few people apply it in their daily living.

You may not agree when we say that to practice the Golden Rule, even in small measure, makes us happy and helps us in our business and in our general daily life. But it is the most practical rule in the world. In serving others, we serve ourselves. People like to deal with those who believe in and practice the Golden Rule. Try it and see!

Now, no doubt, someone is already asking what this has to do with safety. The answer is that if each of us would accept and follow a Golden Rule pertaining to safety, each of us would be less likely to come to harm, whether on the job or off. Here at work, it would mean that our safety record would improve.

One version of the Golden Rule for safety might be stated as "work as safely with others as you would have them work with you." Another might say: "I will follow the safety rules as I would have them followed."

Whenever you approach safety from this angle, you are right back to our often-discussed subject of safety attitudes. A Golden Rule for safety is another way of developing a better mental attitude.

Here are a few of the safety attitudes we need to know and live by:

- An accident can happen to me at any time, when I take a chance.
- Accidents can always be prevented.
- To work safely is a mark of good sense and skill.
- We can always take the time to work safely.
- If I practice safety, my co-workers will think well of me—and I will be at ease with myself.

Safety awareness and safe behavior don't come about by instinct; they must be deliberately learned and practiced—and it is everyone's responsibility to do so. Think how much we would all benefit if everyone shouldered that responsibility and practiced the Golden Rule of safety—at work, at home, on all the roads between, and in all the other activities of our busy lives.

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Participate in Safety

January 21

Sometimes accidents happen because we overlook a hazardous condition. Dangerous situations become second nature; we accept them as the norm. So we must remind ourselves to be safety conscious. This doesn't always come natural.

If not you or me, who then commits unsafe acts? Any Person can contribute to an accident's cause by 1) failing to do what one should do or 2) doing something wrong.

What is an unsafe act? Rather than a glaring error, it can be changing a normal job duty. To avoid these job detours, remember the following:

1. Never use equipment without proper authorization or training.
2. Don't operate equipment at an unsafe speed or in any other improper manner.
3. Never remove safety devices from equipment.
4. Never use faulty or broken tools.

You can do your part to create a safe work place by utilizing the following:

1. Always be alert to your surroundings.
2. Report unsafe conditions to your Foreman or Supervisor immediately.
3. Promptly report any and all injuries that occur on the job.
4. Use personal protective equipment as recommended.
5. Dress properly for the conditions. Don't wear loose jewelry or clothing.
6. Keep all tools in proper working order.
7. Don't leave trash or materials in isles, walkways etc.
8. Avoid horseplay.

Remember that your personal involvement in safety considers the other person as well as yourself. If we all do our part as individuals, we will benefit as a group

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Circle of Safety

January 22

Before you get into a company vehicle, you are required to do a circle of safety. How good is the circle of safety you do? Do you just go through the motions? You only do it when someone's watching? Or are you that conscious individual who takes vehicle safety seriously. Only you can answer that question. Let's take a look at what a circle of safety is all about and how to perform one.

As you know when you park a vehicle for any length of time, anything could and usually does happen. That is why a circle of safety is so important. During the circle of safety we are looking for anything that could be leaking from the vehicle. You're looking for anything unusual. You Check tires for any slices or parts missing on the wheel hubs. This would prevent anything unexpected while your driving down the road.

When you get to the back of the vehicle you need to look at the loaded material. Make sure all material is secured and will not fall off the truck and hit another vehicle while traveling down a road. While you're back there check the rear lights, making sure there are working and not cracked. Look all around, what's in the general vicinity, any special conditions, ice or slippery pavement etc? Look around do you see any unusual terrain, potholes, snow banks, hidden traps, oddly parked vehicles, low tree limb, children present, etc. Make a mental note of anything unusual that you do find.

While you walk around the vehicle, check the bin doors making sure they are secured and the latches work properly, look at the windows, are they clean and not cracked? Are the fire extinguisher and first aid kits current? Anything found on the vehicle that needs to be fixed must be addressed prior to that vehicle leaving the spot it is in.

A circle of safety must be done prior to moving any vehicle that has been parked for length of time. The circle of safety should encompass everything on the vehicle along with anything around it. Remember you are responsible for the safety of that vehicle and those around it once you get behind the driver's wheel.

Can you think of the times that you didn't do a proper circle of safety and what could have happened if something was left out of place on the vehicle? Or something was wrong with the tires? Had a fire or injury and you didn't have the proper extinguisher or first aid kit?

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Safety Attitudes

January 23

Most of us have had some type of safety training during our childhood. We were taught to look both ways before crossing streets and not to play with matches. As adults we are warned by others and by the media not to smoke in bed, not stay out in the sun too long, and not to drive while under the influence of alcohol. And yet, common as these safety rules may be, how many of us can truthfully say we have not turned on or off a light with wet hands, smoked in bed, got a sunburn or driven home from a party after having one to many drinks.

As employees we often neglect safety rules because we are in a hurry, figure accidents always happen to someone else or are resentful towards our supervisors. Every time we engage in unsafe acts, we are betting that an accident will not occur. Is health and possibly life itself worth such a bet?

We can offer excellent safety training. You can know all the safety rules and be able to demonstrate the safe ways to do a job, but knowing every safe rule ever written will not protect you if you fail to use that knowledge daily on the job. If you have a habit of doing things the wrong way, that habit may be difficult to break, but it can be done. The next time you are about to break a safety rule, stop and think about all that could happen to you, your co-workers your family. Imagine the pain, the inconvenience the lost time and money that could result. Then do the job correctly, the safe way. When you do this you will find safety becoming a habit. Safety will turn out to be one of the best habits you have ever had, because it will decrease your chances of joining those who are disabled or killed in accidents each year. Let look at a few basic safety rules:

Report all accidents so others will be able to learn and avoid them in the future.

Know what type of fire extinguishers may be used safely on each class of fire.

Use good body mechanics when lifting or moving objects. Wear eye protection and appropriate PPE at all times.

Practice good housekeeping.

No one can say when an unsafe act or condition will result in an accident, when an accident will result in injury or when injury will cause permanent disability or death. So don't take chances with your life or health. Resolve to work safely.

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No One Is Immune to Stress

January 24

None of us will go through our lives without feeling the effect of stress—more than once or twice. Stress is a normal part of human experience, a response to the daily happenings in the workplace and elsewhere.

(Reaction to Criticism)

Stress is often produced by the way we react to events, rather than by the events themselves. For instance, we may have the idea that if someone corrects or criticizes the way we have done something, that means they think we are incompetent or "no good". But criticism can actually be valuable feedback that will help us to function in more productive ways.

Of course criticism is a lot easier to take if it's delivered in a supportive way, but cruel or mean-spirited criticism is more of a reflection on the critic than the recipient.

We can't expect approval for every action, because—let's face it—being human, we sometimes are in the wrong or make mistakes. But we can recognize ourselves as basically okay people who are making an effort to get along with others and do a good job. Even in the case of real failures, we can refuse to concentrate on the negative but rather accentuate the positive giving ourselves credit for the things that we do well.

(Stress from Worry)

Some of our stress may be caused by worry—over finances, health, or relationships with others. We all have to deal with this kind of stress from time to time. And although we may like the "don't worry; be happy" concept, that's easier said than done. However, there are things we can do to cope with the stress caused by worry.

Coping

First and foremost, try not to keep it all bottled up. Find a person you feel free to confide in and someone who can offer some helpful insights and advice about your particular problem. (These may be the same person or different people.) It's also important to realize that the stress itself can create fresh problems if it so preoccupies your mind that you don't take care of your physical and mental health. Here are some "stressbusters" that may help.

Good nutrition is one of the keystones to good health and a generally low stress level. This means well-balanced meals eaten at regular times and not "bolted down." Go easy on fats, and don't overdo sugars. Cut down on caffeine beverages such as coffee, tea, and cola drinks, because they imitate and aggravate stress-produced symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, shakiness, and speeding thoughts.

Regular exercise is another key. Under stress, our muscles become tense and ought to be loosened. Various stretches are a great way to start, but don't push tight muscles too far too fast.

The importance of adequate sleep and rest can't be overemphasized. You say it's the stress that's keeping you from sleeping well? That may well be a factor, but if you find ways to tempt sleep, you will also find that the stress begins to retreat. Be sure, for example, that your mattress and pillow are comfortable and that you are warm enough (or cool enough, depending on the season). A long bath in lukewarm water is a sleep-inducer many swear by. So is developing a pattern of long, slow, deep breathing.

Although not as basic as food, rest, and exercise, another antidote for stress is meeting new people, making a new friend, finding a new interest or hobby that engages your mind, energy, and time—preferably not competitively.

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The Right Safety Attitude

January 25

Employees are paid to get out production, and there can be no quarrel with the worker who gives his or her all toward this end. However, this doesn't mean you have to take safety shortcuts, since statistics indicate that accident prevention and high production go together like peanut butter and jelly, or April showers and May flowers.

Accidents cost money, and must be paid for by the company. This cost is not like the cost of materials, equipment, or wages. It is a total loss, to say nothing of the loss and suffering of the injured employee. There is no return for the company or the injured employee on money spent as the result of an accident. Look at it this way: An accident-free business is a profitable business.

When you buy a house, a car, or any large item, you weigh the advantages and disadvantages before you invest your money. The same is true of investing your time and effort in safety, with one exception. You may decide to forego the expense of a new car, but you should not, in fact cannot, afford to forego your "safety investment."

A good safety attitude toward laws, rules, and housekeeping practices is the best way to protect yourself and your fellow employees from accidents. People with lackadaisical attitudes about safety blame accidents on the "law of averages." But accidents don't just happen—they are caused. Most accidents happen as a result of an unsafe condition, a poor attitude, or both.

People with bad attitudes are showing disregard for themselves and others. Just look at traffic accidents, for example. Research shows that bad driving attitudes often cause unsafe acts, and unsafe acts are involved in most accidents. The same is true in your job.

People who take chances—trying to repair machines while they are running, or removing a guard to make the work go quicker—are showing a bad safety attitude. You can never be smart enough or quick enough to beat the odds!

What about good attitudes toward safety? All of us are required to follow certain procedures in our jobs, but your best defense against injury is a good safety attitude.

One way to build a good safety attitude is to learn your job well. Know the hazards and know the safeguards. If you understand your work, you will have a better understanding of the importance of safe work practices and a good safety attitude.

Another indication of a good safety attitude is to set an example for others. If you see a piece of scrap on the floor, take the time to pick it up, because it could cause an injury to someone else. This may sound too simple to work, but it really does. Safe attitudes are contagious.

If you run into a problem that you're not sure you can handle safely on your own, report it to your supervisor or manager, who is in the best position to correct the problem quickly. Another key to working and being safe is communication. Here's your chance to tell us what safety items you are concerned about. Is there a condition you know about which could cause an injury? Is there a suggestion that you feel would help prevent an injury? It is part of the company's safety attitude that you are in an excellent position to spot the signs of potential trouble. So all your comments will be reviewed and corrective action will be taken promptly.

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Take Safety Home with You

January 26

On the job, we talk a lot about safety and do a lot about it. On the job site, part of the responsibility belongs to the company, the supervisor, the safety department, and other people with whom we work. On the job, it is easy for us to keep safety in mind all of the time.

But, how much of this safety-consciousness do we take home with us? Safety needs to be planned for and worked at there, too.

Of all home accidents, falls and fires are the worst killers. Knowing this will give you a lot of ideas about what to look for when you take a very important step in pursuit of home safety and inspection tour.

When inspecting for fire hazards, we need to think of two important factors: how to prevent fires and what to do if one does occur.

We need to devise two lists; The "prevention list" should include safe storage and use of flammables; no faulty electrical equipment; training children not to play with matches, lighters, etc.; and no unattended fireplace fires or operating space heaters. On the other list should be smoke alarms; kitchen fire extinguisher; knowing fire department number; planning and practicing escape routes for each resident, including where to meet after leaving the building.

Home falls occur on stairs, on slippery floors and icy steps, from ladders, and from substitutes for ladders.

There are many precautions that can be taken to prevent falls or at least minimize the likelihood of a fall, including:

- Nonskid surfaces and no-slip rugs and floor mats
- Prompt cleanup of spills
- Keeping "traffic lanes" free of clutter and electrical cords
- Providing stairways with full-length handrails and plenty of light
- Watching where you're going and being careful when climbing.

Although we've concentrated today on the two most frequently fatal types of home accidents, there are other hazards and protections we need to be alert to as well. Here are just a few examples:

Electrical safety: Keep appliances, tools, and cords in good repair. Pull plug, not cord, when disconnecting. Don't overload circuits. Don't use near water, or when standing in it.

Hazardous substances: Read and follow label directions for household cleaners, pesticides, paints, etc., and use any recommended protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, and masks.

Follow doctor's instructions for prescribed medicines, label for OTC products. Keep all such substances where children cannot get at them.

Burns/wounds: Use gloves, mitts, or other holders when handling hot pans; keep handles turned away from front of stove. Keep sharp objects out of children's reach, and handle them carefully yourself. To pick up broken glass, use heavy gloves or tongs for large pieces, damp rag or paper towel for small particles.

While focusing on prevention, remember to be prepared in case an accident does happen. If possible, have at least one family member trained in first aid, CPR, and the Heimlich maneuver. Keep phone numbers for doctor, poison center, and emergency services handy.

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Proper PPE

January 27

You'll never see a football player in a game without a helmet, a baseball catcher playing without a mask or a firefighter putting out a house fire without his fire fighting equipment on. It would be as unlikely to find an ironworker or any other skilled-trade worker on a major construction site without a hard hat.

However depending on the job you are performing, there are many other kinds of personal protective equipment and guards that are just as important as the hard hat. The utility industry is a rugged business with some rugged people working in it. Too often we confuse ruggedness with faulty safety practices. We fail to use a guard or protective device when we know better.

Just like the professional football players take extra precautions; they not only wear every piece of protective equipment they also make sure that it is in good repair. Their jobs depend on their health and physical condition. Professional football players have plenty of chances to be injured and there are not about to add to those chances by not using the proper protective equipment. Why should you?

Think about the many different jobs you do each day and the number of times you have exposed yourself unnecessarily to hazards because you failed to wear the proper protective equipment that is provided for your protection. Your eyes for example may be exposed to hazards, such as flying objects, sunlight and glare, arcing metals. That's why there are many different types of eye protection provided for your protection.

Your hands can also be injured by burns, puncture wounds, abrasions, dog bites, etc. Different types of protection are needed, including rubber gloves, leather gloves, rubber sleeves. The torso and lower extremities may be exposed to some of these same type injuries whereas special PPE are required such as, fire resistant clothing, long pants, coveralls.

We must consider the hazard of the work we are performing and the parts of the bodies threatened by them. Then we must obtain and use the necessary protective equipment. Be a pro- protect yourself.

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Be An Extra-Safe Driver

January 28

Those who drive for a living would be the first to agree it can be mighty dangerous out there on the crowded roads. Although the common factors of inexperience, recklessness, and aggressive driving contribute to many vehicle accidents, it doesn't explain why so many professional drivers get into accidents. A driver may be trained, experienced, and competent behind the wheel, but the very flood of vehicles competing for space on the roads today presents added danger to all drivers. Even the very best drivers must learn to operate their vehicles with life-saving EXTRAS.

Drivers should take extra care of their vehicles' maintenance by keeping them in good operating condition. Before getting behind the wheel, do a simple walk around the vehicle to insure that tires are properly inflated and have good tread, check that lights are clear and working, and see that windshields are clean and wipers blades are sharp. Once inside the vehicle, drivers should take the extra time to check the gas gage, adjust the mirrors, seat, and seatbelt to a comfortable position and, if it's an unfamiliar vehicle, locate the lights, brakes, and wipers. Horns, flasher lights, and other warning devices are not just accessories but vital parts of the extra safety built into any vehicle, so make sure they operate properly.

On the roadways, be extra careful by driving defensively. Following the rules of the road can help you concentrate on what you should be doing...driving. Stay out of the other vehicle's blind spot and avoid tailgating. Instead, keep a safe distance from other drivers by maintaining that extra safety cushion of driving space between your vehicle and those around you. As an extra precaution, know the condition of the weather and road and drive only as fast as those conditions allow.

Be extra cautious by staying alert and expecting the unexpected. Watch out for and anticipate other drivers, pedestrians or children on or near the road. Safe drivers scan constantly for hazards, predicting how they may be affected by a hazard and pre-determining how to avoid or reduce them.

The ever-changing variable of the road and other vehicles can make drivers instantly vulnerable to accidents. If drivers don't practice these life-saving extras on the road, they might personally discover why vehicle deaths and serious injuries now total more than all the wartime wounded and fatalities since 1776.

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Job Knowledge—A Key to Job Safety

January 29

As far as I can see, we're all sound in mind and body. I, for one, want to stay that way, and I assume you do too.

Since you began working here, we've tried to make you aware of safety. There are signs that tell you about various safety rules, and there are posters that remind you to wear your goggles and hard hats. I call you together for these occasional talks to hammer on the same ideas. The result, I hope, is that all of us are always conscious of the need to be careful in our work, so that we and others do stay safe and healthy. But maybe we haven't talked enough about the one thing that can do more to keep you from getting hurt than almost anything else: knowing your job. If you know what you're doing, chances are you won't get hurt.

Knowing your job, of course, includes a lot of things. First, there is the skill you had to learn when you first started the job. Not just anyone can operate a piece of machinery safely. You had to learn the right way to use the equipment.

You also had to learn what you couldn't do with that machine or piece of equipment. That's just as important. It's important to know that a crane can't handle more than so many pounds of material. It's important to know that a crescent wrench was never designed to drive nails.

But besides knowing what you can do and can't do with the equipment and materials you work with, besides having the skill you need to do your work, you also have to know what the dangers of your work are.

For example: If you're using a grinding wheel, you'll know that there is danger from flying particles, and you'll keep a guard in place and wear safety goggles. When you know your job, you know there is good reason for the protective equipment you are required to wear.

The first rule of safety, then, is know your job. If you really do know your job, you'll never get to a point at which you think you're so skilled that you no longer need to guard against the dangers that are part of the job.

Make Safety a Way of Life



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Forget About Luck

January 30

Safety is not a matter of luck; it has to be taken seriously. To begin with, you should understand that accidents do happen, and they happen to perfectly nice people like you and me. Yes, sometimes we are lucky enough not to get hurt, even when we do things that we shouldn't do—like standing on the top rung of the ladder or trying to adjust a machine that hasn't been de-energized, let alone locked out.

But we can't and shouldn't count on luck. We are too valuable to ourselves, our families, and our friends to trust our lives and limbs to plain dumb chance. Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind that will help us take safety seriously and make the effort to stay safe.

Observe and Obey Warning Signs

Every day we see safety signs in and out of the workplace that tell us that something may not be okay to do. The next time you see a sign that you may have passed many times without paying attention to, try reading the words. Think about the caution that the words convey. Then ask yourself if there might not be a very good reason that the warning sign has been posted. There probably is, so why not take the warning?

Many of us retain the somewhat childish habit of rejecting advice given to us by someone in authority. We know better, of course, because we aren't children anymore, but that can be a hard habit to break. Break it we must, though, if we take safety seriously, since we are not only valuable human beings, but, like all human beings, we are vulnerable. A warning is worth paying attention to.

Be Willing to Ask for Help

Another thing we don't really like to do, like listening to others, is relying on others for help. But sometimes, in order to stay safe, we have to accept the fact that we can't do a particular job all alone. We have to say to a co-worker, "Will you give me a hand? Are you too proud to say those words? Too shy? Reluctant to bother someone in the middle of that person's own work? Those are easy reasons to understand—but they aren't worth getting hurt for. You don't have to be too proud, because everyone needs help once in a while. You don't need to feel shy, because your co-worker has the same problems that you do. And you don't have to get hurt just to avoid interrupting someone else—after all, wouldn't you be glad to give someone else a minute or two of your time in order to prevent an injury?

Appreciate Teamwork

It takes everyone working together cooperatively in the workplace for everyone to be really safe. You can do a lot to maintain your own safety, but you can't be totally safe all by yourself. Why not? Because there's always the possibility that someone else may cause the accident that will do harm to others—including you.

That's why we all have to watch out for everybody, making safety a team effort. Teamwork means taking the time to show someone else the safe way to do the job, to point out a condition you think may represent a danger, to ask someone if they know the right way for you to do something new. Cooperation of this sort is necessary because we are all in this together—not just in the workplace but in life itself. And life, like work, is not only safer and more productive, but even more fun when we cooperate.

The essence of safety is the realization that we are too valuable to leave our well-being to chance. That makes us want to take care of ourselves—to take our jobs, and our safe performance of them, seriously—and also to protect those working at our side

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Back Safety

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Back disorders are listed in the "top ten" leading workplace injuries published by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. They account for 27 percent of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses involving days away from work. It's no wonder. Your back is a sophisticated piece of machinery made up of numerous muscles, bones, nerves, and supporting tissues. It's a machine you use every day, probably in ways you don't even notice.

Just like the finest machinery, your back requires proper care to keep it working. If it's not working right, you'll suffer. An injured back affects your ability to move your limbs, your hips, your neck, and your head. Injuries to the back can be very debilitating, causing a lot of pain, time away from work, and often requiring physical therapy or even surgery. Everyone whose job involves stressful lifting or awkward postures is at risk for a back injury. Here are some tips to keep your back in optimum condition:

While lifting:

- Don't bend over an object you are lifting. Bend your knees, squatting in front of the object to reach it.
- Lift the object slowly and carefully, using your leg and arm muscles to lift, not pulling with your back.
- Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.
- While lifting, keep the object as close to your body as possible.
- Keep abdominal muscles tight while making the lift.
- Use the same techniques when you put the object down.
- If the object is too big or too heavy to lift using these techniques, use mechanical assistance or get someone else to help.

When reaching for objects:

- Do not reach for an object unless you're sure you're strong enough to lift it.
- Use a step ladder to reach objects above shoulder height.
- Avoid awkward stretches while reaching. These stress your back and could cause you to lose your balance.
- Don't depend on structures to support you (e.g., a shelf support, a storage rack, etc.). These could easily give way if you pull or tug on them.

Exercise also plays an important role in keeping your back strong, healthy, and flexible. A properly exercised back is less likely to be injured. Your physician, company medical personnel, or other health-care provider can recommend the best exercises for you, taking into account your physical condition and the type of work you do.

Finally, a word about back belts. There's a lot of controversy about using back belts to control low back injuries in workers who don't have an existing injury. According to a report published by the National Safety Council, available scientific data does not completely support nor condemn the use of back belts to control low back injuries. One thing that is agreed upon is that back belts should never be a substitute for a comprehensive back injury prevention program. Taking this into consideration, many companies have developed a back belt policy. If you do use a back belt, be aware that you may experience a false sense of security by wearing the belt. You may be tempted

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to lift loads you wouldn't otherwise lift. Remember, it's your back doing the work--not the belt!

Always be alert for situations that could cause a back injury. Be kind to your back. Don't take unnecessary chances. By following proper lifting and reaching techniques and exercising properly, you'll help keep back problems behind you!

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