

September 2013

Morning Safety Focus



Any time the safe way seems like a little too much time or trouble, any time you're tempted to take a chance or a shortcut "just this once", remember that you may have to live with the consequences for the rest of your life.

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SEPTEMBER 1, 2013

Portable Ladders: DOs and DON'Ts

Portable ladders are a simple and effective means for climbing safely to a work area. However, careless use of ladders has led to thousands of disabling injuries and even fatalities. These accidents could have been avoided by following three basic safety rules.

Use a ladder that is the right type and size for the job to be done. The right type of ladder means using a heavy ladder for construction work - not a light household-type ladder. Metal ladders should never be used if you are working near exposed electrical circuits or power lines. This is particularly important if you are working in fields near power lines where a wind may blow the ladder into those lines. If you are working around trees and shrubs, check to be sure that power lines are not hidden behind them. The safest stepladder is 10 feet long or less. Never splice ladders together or place a ladder on an unstable base such as a barrel or box to gain additional height.

Don't use a ladder that is in poor condition. Inspect the ladder each time you use it. Check for missing, broken, or weakened rungs, side rails, and cleats. Make sure that auxiliary equipment such as ropes, pulleys, and extension ladder locks are in good repair. Clean oil, mud, or grease off ladder rungs and side rails to prevent slipping. Do not use a defective ladder. If your ladder needs repair, mark or tag it: **DANGEROUS - DO NOT USE!**

If it cannot be repaired, dispose of it permanently.

Take common-sense precautions when positioning a ladder or working on it. Position your ladder from the wall at a distance equal to approximately one-fourth the length of the ladder (at a 75.5-degree angle). Make sure the footing is secure. If it isn't, lash it to the point where the ladder touches the surface it is leaning against. NEVER lean a ladder against something that might move.

When placing a ladder up against a building, don't lean it on a window sash. Instead, fasten a board securely across the ladder so that the board extends across the window and for some distance on either side of the window.

As you climb up and down the ladder, always face the ladder and use both hands to hold the side rails. Don't carry tools or materials in your hands as you climb. Instead, put them in a tool belt or use a rope and bucket to raise and lower them to and from the work area.

Always stay below the top three ladder rungs, unless you have a firm handhold or are wearing a secured safety belt. Many deaths have resulted from workers who fell off ladders because they weren't wearing a safety belt.

Keep the ladder from becoming unsteady by not leaning or overreaching from it. Never reposition a ladder while you are standing on it. Avoid using ladders in high winds.

If you are working in front of a door that opens toward a ladder you are working on, block the door, lock it, or guard it. Have a co-worker guard your work area to prevent anyone or anything from accidentally bumping into the ladder. Barricade or rope off the space around it.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2013

Safety Attitudes

Most of us had some type of safety training during 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 to 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 that we have never turned a light on or off with wet hands, smoked in bed, gotten a sunburn, or driven home from a party after having a bit too much to drink?

Employees often neglect safety rules because they:

Are in a hurry.

Figure accidents always happen to others.

Are resentful of their supervisors.

Every time employees engage in unsafe acts, they are taking a gamble -- betting that an accident will not occur. Is health, and possibly life itself, worth such a bet?

When employees are aware of safety rules and break them anyway, we say they have unsafe attitudes. Picture a technician who neglects to wear eye protection while working with harmful liquids that could splash the face. Think about a warehouse worker who knows that an object weighs too much to be lifted by one person, but nevertheless attempts to lift it without any help. These employees are demonstrating unsafe attitudes.

Safety officers may give excellent safety orientations, you may know all the safety rules, and you may be able to demonstrate the safe way 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. The habit of doing things the wrong way is difficult to break, but it can be done. The next time you are about to break a safety rule, stop and think about what could happen to you, your co-workers, or your family. Imagine the pain, the inconvenience, and the lost time and money that could result. Then do the job correctly, the safe way. At first you will be slowed down, but soon you will start to notice safety becoming a habit - and it 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.

Here are a few basic safety rules that should be practiced again and again until they become automatic:

Report all accidents to your supervisor, even though they may seem minor at the time. Studying the causes of accidents points out ways in which they can be avoided in the future.

Practice good housekeeping to prevent slips and falls -- your own or anyone else's.

Clean up spills, and keep all areas - especially heavily traveled ones - free of clutter.

Know which types of fire extinguishers may be used safely on each class of fire. Use of the wrong type of extinguisher can cause serious injury. For example, you may receive a serious or fatal shock if you use water on an electrical fire.

Use good body mechanics when lifting and moving objects. Get help when you need it and let your legs rather than your back do most of the work.

Wear eye protection when needed -- when there may be flying particles or when working with acids or harmful chemicals that might splash.

Make sure electrical equipment is in good condition before using it. Have defective tools, cords, or other equipment tagged for repair. Do not touch outlets, switches, or electrical equipment with wet hands.

Share your own safe attitude and habits with your co-workers. You'll do this in a tactful way of course, but remembering that it's important for their safety and your own.

No one can say when an unsafe condition or act will result in an accident, when an accident will result in injury, or when injury will cause permanent disability or even death. So we must all resolve to work safely and never take chances with the life or health of ourselves and our fellow workers.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

Stay On Your Feet with the Three Point Rule

Falling while getting into or out of heavy equipment or a truck, hooking up air and electrical lines, or mounting or dismounting trailers can cause serious injuries. In fact, falls to a lower level accounted for 86,946 injuries in 2011 and 6,207 deaths between 2004-2011, according to the National Safety Council's "Injury Facts".

The biggest cause of falls from a vehicle, according to the University of Kansas Transportation Center in Lawrence, is driver error and failure to follow the "Three Point Rule". **The Three Point Rule means three of four limbs are in contact with the vehicle at all times - two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.** The system allows a person to have maximum stability and support, thereby reducing the likelihood of slipping and falling.

Keep the following in mind when entering and exiting heavy equipment and trucks:

- Wear footwear with good support and slip resistance.
- Exit and enter facing the cab.
- Get a firm grip on rails or handles with your hands.
- Look for obstacles on the ground before exiting.
- Exercise extra caution when working in inclement weather.
- Don't climb down with something in your free hand. Put it on the vehicle floor and reach up for it when getting to the ground.
- Don't rush to climb out after a long shift. Descend slowly to avoid straining a muscle.
- Never jump out. You may land off balance or on an uneven surface and fall or sprain something.
- Don't use tires or wheel hubs as a step surface.
- Don't use the door frame or door edge as a handhold.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2013

Golden Rule for Safety

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.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2013

Hurry-up Can Hurt

Sports cars that hurry over a designated driving course in competition with other cars are usually marked with racing stripes. Iodine and bandages are the racing stripes people often wear when they've hurried on the job. Even people who have never been known to do most things speedily will sometimes hurry through certain activities. Frequently used sayings concerning this kind of behavior include "haste makes waste" and "the hurrier I go, the behinder I get." One even more closely associated with safety is "hurry-up can hurt."

In most instances, hurrying on the job has little to do with increased production. It usually is connected with attempting to do something the easy way, getting a tough job over and done with quickly, or getting off the job as soon as possible. All of these reasons for hurrying lead to unsafe acts and injuries.

The rally driver may "lose it" on a curve when going too fast or knock down pylons by cutting it too short on the turns. We have similar results with unwarranted hurrying and shortcuts on our jobs. For instance:

- Not wearing safety glasses because the job will take only a second
- Charging through a door without regard for fellow employees right behind or ahead of you
- Not taking time to properly lock out and tag machinery before beginning maintenance or repair activities
- Carrying a heavy object without first planning a safe, unobstructed route -- or trying to carry too much at once in order to avoid making a second trip

Think back to an incident when you either got hurt or came very close. When you review the circumstances of the accident or near-miss, there's a good chance that hurrying was part of your difficulty. If you took a shortcut, you probably realize, as most of us do sooner or later, the shortcut really didn't save any time and wasn't worth the risk involved.

However, it should be pointed out that faster ways of doing things may be beneficial. If you think that there is a way of getting a certain job done more quickly, by all means bring it to the attention of your supervisor. But don't proceed to use the new method or make any changes without first getting them approved.

Some speeding up of operations is a natural outcome of experience, as we become more familiar with our jobs and therefore more efficient. But there comes a point at which increased speed through experience becomes negligible, while the danger of not remaining alert on the job grows.

As mentioned earlier, a lot of us get into trouble hurrying to get off the job. Hurry-up can hurt in the parking lot and on the road, too.

Wherever they happen, and for whatever reason, accidents cost money. So, using common sense to pace our actions at a rate that is both safe and productive works to everybody's benefit.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2013

Eye Injuries Far From Rare

Every day across the United States about 2,000 people experience eye injuries on the job, with as many as one in five cases resulting in temporary or permanent vision loss.

The top causes of eye injury are:

- flying objects, including metal, wood bits and glass
- incidents involving the use of tools
- particles
- chemicals
- harmful radiation
- combinations of these and other hazards

Eye protection must be used in any situation where there's a chance of an eye injury occurring. Workers aren't the only people at risk. Anyone passing by, whether it's a coworker or a visitor, needs protection.

Whenever possible, workers should minimize eye hazards before starting work, by using machine guards, work screens and other engineering controls.

There are several types of eye protection designed for specific hazards. They include:

- Safety glasses with side protection, to guard against particles, flying objects and dust.
- Goggles for anyone working with chemicals.
- Special safety glasses, goggles, face shields or helmets designed to protect against hazardous radiation from welding, laser and fiber optics operations.

Lenses are made from either glass, plastic or polycarbonate. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Glass lenses do not scratch as easily as other types and can be used around harsh chemicals. On the downside, they can be heavy and less comfortable.

Plastic lenses are lighter and less prone to fogging up, but they are less scratch-resistant than glass lenses.

Like plastic lenses, polycarbonate ones are lightweight and are not prone to fogging up. They are also stronger and more impact-resistant than either glass or plastic lenses. However, they tend to scratch more easily than glass lenses do.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2013

Start and Finish Safely

There's a start and a finish to just about everything, including your daily job activities. Traditionally, home-style philosophers have placed great value on good beginnings with such phrases as "getting off on the right foot" and "getting up on the right side of the bed". Good endings come in for about as much attention through such sayings as "all's well that ends well" and "last but not least".

Getting off on the right foot in your job each day is important not only to your personal success but to your safety, as well. The same goes for the end of the day. A good ending is a key part of the overall safety picture. When you come to work in the morning, there should be more to starting your job than just routinely turning on a machine or beginning a particular operation. First, take a safety survey. What shape is the area in? Are there any slippery spots on the floor? Are there any tripping hazards around? How about machines? Were any guards left off machinery? Check for potential hazards. It takes just a minute to survey your machine or work area, and it's time well invested. A minor adjustment at the start may prevent a major problem later on. Conditions change quickly, and from the time you left the scene the day before, there may have been another shift working in the area, or maintenance or cleaning crews may have altered the conditions you're used to.

When it's quitting time, you still play an important part in the safety cycle. The condition in which you leave your area or equipment will have a bearing on the safety of people who follow you on the next shift and on your own safety when you report the next day. Just don't quit abruptly at the end of the day. This is as poor a practice as starting your job before a brief survey of the situation. First of all, make sure your job is really finished -- all machines turned off, tools and other items off the floor and in their proper places. Always pick up all trash, scrap, and other waste, and deposit it in the proper receptacles. Take time to eliminate any slipping hazards by wiping up grease or water. If there's any unusual condition that could be hazardous, make sure you communicate it to your replacement or the supervisor on the next shift.

Quitting time is time to take the safety of other into consideration, especially the safety of those who will be in the area before you return. The area in which you work and the equipment you use are very important factors in your welfare. Take care of them and pass them on to the next person in a condition that will contribute to the safety and well-being of both of you.

Of course, there's a lot more to job safety than beginnings and endings. There's that important period in between, too. Nevertheless, a bad start or finish can ruin a whole day. Try to maintain a cool, steady pace. Prepare yourself mentally when you arrive at work in the morning, and be cautious toward the end of the day when fatigue may take over.

Remember, safety doesn't punch a time clock. It has to be on the job for every shift -- 24 hours each day.

SEPTEMBER 8, 2013

Take Safety Personally

With all the emphasis on safety programs, safety training, and safety rules, it's easy to forget that when you come right down to it, safety is a personal matter. Let me explain a little. When I see Betty operating her die press with her safety glasses hanging around her neck, I may very well holler at her in less than musical tones to get them up where they belong. And when Jack attempts to bypass the machine guard on his press, I'll address him in no uncertain or gentle terms. Should either of them take my comments personally? The answer is both "no" and "yes". It's "no" in the sense that I'm not attacking either of them as a person, only criticizing a particular behavior. But it's "yes" because the reason is concern for their personal safety.

And when each of us makes safety his or her own personal goal, this will be a safer workplace for all of us. It takes the same kind of responsibility you accept and exercise when you're driving. You know you have brakes, and you have them regularly checked, but in heavy traffic or bad weather you don't rely totally on the brakes -- you make it a point to drive more slowly and be even more watchful than usual. In the same way, even when your machine guards and safety glasses are in place, you can't assume that means you don't have to exercise care and caution.

A Successful Formula

When you take safety personally and add a generous portion of positive thinking, you have a good formula for safety success. By positive thinking, I mean a combination of attitude and objectives. It means first of all believing that your actions count and can prevent accidents and preserve safety. Then it means knowing the difference between safe and unsafe actions and being determined always to choose the former.

Here are some expressions of positive thinking with regard to safety:

I am responsible for my own health, safety, and well-being.

I am also my brothers' and sisters' keeper in the matter of safety on the job.

Accidents can and will happen unless I do my part to prevent them.

There is always a best - safest - way to do any job, and that way is the only right way to do it.

It is only common sense to follow the work rules and practices designed to promote the health and safety of myself and my co-workers.

Before starting any job, I will check carefully to be sure there are no hidden hazards that require special protective measures.

When protective equipment is called for, I will wear it; when special procedures are required, I will follow them.

If there's one thing I hope you'll take out on the floor with you from this session, it's this: In our ongoing battle against accident and injury, two of our most powerful weapons are positive thinking and taking safety personally.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2013

Don't Let Safety Get Foiled in a Single Second

It takes a **minute** to write a safety rule.

It takes an **hour** to hold a safety meeting.

It takes a **week** to plan a good safety program.

It takes a **month** to put that program into operation.

It takes a **year** to win a safety award.

It takes a **lifetime** to prove you are a safe worker.

But it only takes a **second** to destroy it all - with one accident.

That's why it pays to take the time to help people work more safely.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2013

Use the Right Tool the Right Way

We have a great variety of tools of different types at our facility and all of us, at one time or another, use them. Some are specially designed tools for only one or two jobs. We are glad to spend additional money to get tools we need to do our work better and more safely - so there is never any excuse for using the wrong tool. If you don't have the right tool handy, take the time to go get it. Don't take chances!

Of course, a right tool is only half the story. The other half is using the tool the way it is supposed to be used. Using the wrong tool or using a tool wrongly can be equally dangerous. Here are a couple of glaring examples:

Did you ever see a worker put a wrench on a pipe joint or nut and then slip a piece of pipe over the handle to get additional leverage? No better way has been discovered to hurt yourself and ruin equipment, too.

Then there is the one who uses the wrong type of wrench and takes a long shot that it won't slip and result in a couple weeks out of commission.

This third loser is the one who holds an object in his hand and tries to work on it with a screwdriver. The result of a slip is a puncture wound - which doctors tell us is the most dangerous kind because it is the most difficult to clean and the most likely to lead to infection.

All of these are examples of unsafe acts. But there is another important point to consider. No tool is the right tool unless it is in good condition. Is the hammer head secure; is the handle good? Are cutting tool edges sharp? Check the jaws on your wrenches for worn or spread jaws, which are potential knuckle-busters. If the tool is bad, don't use it - replace it. A dirty or greasy tool is a hazard, too, since grease and dirt cause slipping.

One last point: A lot of accidents are caused by leaving tools lying around after the job is done. They cause trips, they can ruin machinery, and if they fall, they can do plenty of damage.

Let's remember that hand tools are like fire. They serve us in many ways, but, like fire, they are a serious potential hazard.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

Hand Protection

Next to our eyes, our hands are probably the most important part of our body when it comes to doing our work. They're involved in almost every thing we do. Yet many of the things we do with our hands are done without any deliberate thought. Your hands have no fear. They'll go anyplace they're sent and they only act as wisely as the person they belong to; so before you use your hands think of their safekeeping.

Here are the most common types of hand injuries and what you can do to prevent them:

Traumatic injuries often occur from careless use of machinery or tools. Hands and fingers get caught, pinched or crushed in chains, wheels, rollers, or gears. They are punctured, torn or cut by spiked or jagged tools and edges that shear or chop. Safety precautions should include using shields, guards, gloves, or safety locks; handling knives or tools with care; and keeping hands, jewelry and clothing away from moving parts.

Contact injuries result from contact with solvents, acids, cleaning solutions, flammable liquids and other substances that can cause burns or injure tissue. To protect against these injuries, read the product labels, use the right glove or barrier cream, and wash hands frequently.

Repetitive motion injuries happen when tasks require repeated, rapid hand movements for long periods of time. Manufacturing, assembling, or computer work may lead to these injuries. Change your grip, hand position, or motion. If possible, rotate tasks to give your hands a rest.

You can protect yourself from hand injuries by remembering the following basic safety rules:

- Recognize hazards.
- Think through each job before you begin.
- Follow safety rules.
- Avoid shortcuts.
- If an accident happens, seek prompt treatment.
- Report injuries to your supervisor.

Healthy hands are built to last a lifetime. Injuries can last a lifetime, too. Be aware of your hand placement and take precautions to guard them.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

The 10 Top Steps to Ladder Safety

It's almost time to clean leaves out of gutters, but when you do, keep in mind some of these safe-climbing guidelines.

Never climb higher than four rungs from the top of the ladder -- any higher could throw off your balance.

Don't place ladders near electrical wires.

Set up the ladder on a level surface, and secure its anti-slip feet. Don't use ladders on ice or snow.

Allow only one person on a ladder at a time.

Always maintain three points of contact with the ladder (two feet/ one hand or two hands/ one foot).

Never use a damaged ladder.

Don't lean sideways or reach out while on a ladder.

Check the ladder for slip hazards (paint or oil on rungs) before you climb. Make sure the bottoms of your shoes are clean and dry before going on the ladder.

Lean the ladder against a secure structure, not against gutters, drainpipes, tree limbs, or glass.

Always face the ladder when ascending or descending.

Every year, at least 65,000 people require emergency room treatment as a result of ladder falls. Follow these tips to prevent accidents at home and at work.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2013

Circle of Safety

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 conscientious 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 they 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 any 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?

SEPTEMBER 14, 2013

"But What Can I Do?"

The other day I heard one of our company's employees ask: "What can I do about accident prevention, since I only work here?" Well, we all work here, and presumably we all want our worksite to be as safe and healthful as possible. That won't happen though, if we pass the buck.

In reality there's a great deal that every one of us can do about accident prevention. It has to do with being continuously alert to possible hazards and following safe work practices and procedures -- just the sort of thing we discuss in safety talks.

Here are just 10 guidelines for "what can I do?" -- what each of us can do:

1. Know your job. Follow all instructions, and if you are not sure of exactly how to carry out an assigned operation, ask your foreman before you begin.
2. Use tools properly. Select the right ones -- the ones designed for the job. Be sure they're in good condition. Put them away when you finish.
3. Practice good housekeeping. Keep your work area clean and orderly, with nothing in the aisles to create a tripping hazard. Clean up spills promptly. Dispose of scrap properly.
4. Develop good lifting habits. Remember the training you've had in this, especially: lifting with your legs, not your back, and getting help for loads you can't easily handle alone. Likewise be ready to team-lift with a co-worker.
5. Avoid falls. Watch where you're going. If using a ladder, set it up properly, face it when climbing up or down, using both hands, and don't overreach. Don't overload scaffolds and keep them clear of excess materials.
6. Dress safely for work. Leave your jewelry at home or keep it in a pocket. Wear sturdy, low-heeled shoes. Wear short sleeves or keep long sleeves buttoned at the wrist. Don't wear gloves or a long hair style around machines.
7. Use required personal protective equipment. Wear a hard hat, gloves, safety shoes and glasses, or whatever specialized equipment the job calls for. That way you avoid both injury and disciplinary action.
8. Be alert around machinery. Stand clear of moving equipment and overhead loads. Never get on or off moving equipment. Never bypass machine guards. Follow lockout procedures as needed and observe all warning signs and tags.
9. Report all accidents and near-miss incidents. Determining the causes can help prevent further incidents that could have more serious results. Get prompt first aid for cuts and scratches - minor injuries can become a major problem if infection sets in.
10. Avoid horseplay and practical joking. They can easily get out of control and cause serious harm. Discourage others from engaging in such activities.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2013

Pinch Points

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. Here are a few pinch point pointers to get you thinking about these hazards:

Pinch point conditions are one of the most difficult hazards against which we must 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 the 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.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2013

Preventing Accidents is Everyone's Responsibility . . .

1. Know and use safe work procedures.
2. Avoid unsafe acts and don't take risks.
3. Always use assigned personal protective equipment (PPE).
4. Report safety and health hazards to your supervisor. In fact, report anything that doesn't seem right even if you're not sure that it's really a hazard.
5. Report job-related injuries and illnesses to your supervisor.
6. Cooperate with safety inspections and job hazard analyses.
7. Follow company safety rules and OSHA regulations.
8. Look for ways to make the job safer.
9. Participate actively in safety training and take it seriously.
10. Treat safety as one of your most important job responsibilities.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2013

Your Momma Doesn't Work Here

No, your momma doesn't work here, but if she did, no doubt you would behave differently. What is it about being an adult that makes people behave or have an attitude that would upset them if their kids had the same attitude? We take a risk by taking a shortcut on the job (not using a face shield, not testing a circuit for energy, etc.) and if our kids or a family member did the same thing, we would say they are unsafe.

Every day we leave the house and make a choice about safety. When an injury occurs in the workplace we say, "Oh how sad". Yep, it's sad alright! Recently a client called about an electrical contact fatality. We discussed how sad it was because this shouldn't have happened. This individual dies with a pair of high-voltage gloves hanging on his belt! How sad!

Dupont has pointed out through their research that 99.9% of all accidents can be prevented. The remaining .01% is for the sissies who want to blame someone else. If your momma worked with you, she would make sure you did the right thing or else! Problem is your momma isn't here to watch out for you, so grow up and get some character.

Character is what you do when nobody is watching. It means that since it has been proven that more people are saved by wearing their seat belts while operating equipment, you do it. Even when your boss or safety inspector is not at the job, you are doing the job safe without shortcuts. When someone tells you to get the job done "no matter what", you don't interpret it as, "take a safety shortcut". Being a safe mature adult means following proper work procedures when nobody is looking so you can go home every day without injury to your family and friends.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

These Acts and Conditions Cause Accidents

You may have heard of the "daily dozen", the "dirty dozen", and the "ten most wanted". These terms have a counterpart known as the "unwanted ten", which are applicable to job safety and also have an important bearing on health.

These accident causes are categorized into two sections of ten each: "Unsafe acts" and "unsafe conditions". If we acquaint ourselves with these enemies, a majority of our accidents can be eliminated.

Unsafe Acts

- Unauthorized operation or use of equipment.
- Failure to secure or tie down equipment against unexpected movement.
- Operating tools or equipment at an unsafe speed.
- Failure to warn or signal as required.
- Removing or bypassing safety devices.
- Using defective tools or equipment, or using them in an improper manner.
- Standing in an unsafe place or taking an unsafe posture.
- Riding hazardous moving equipment.
- Indulging in horseplay, or distracting or startling other employees.
- Failure to wear personal protection equipment. (Very important!)

Unsafe Conditions

- Lack of adequate guards or safety devices.
- Lack of adequate warning system.
- Fire and explosion hazards.
- Improper or inadequate personal protection, clothing, or equipment.
- Poor housekeeping.
- Protruding object hazards.
- Close clearance and congestion hazards.
- Hazardous arrangement, placement, or storage of chemicals.
- Inadequate illumination, intense noise.
- Defective tools and equipment.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2013

Keep the Sting Out of Summers End

Ah the end of summer, still time for picnics, barbecues, ... and bees. Bees at this time are very aggressive, knowing the end is near. You can enjoy the outdoors without getting stung. Follow these tips from the University of Delaware:

When cooking outdoors, cover food and beverages so wasps and bees are not attracted to them.

Don't drink directly from open soda cans outdoors, since wasps and bees can crawl inside. Use a straw or pour soda into cups instead.

When eating outdoors at parks and restaurants, don't sit close to trash containers.

Never play near beehives, even if they appear to be empty.

Avoid wearing bright colors -- especially white, blue, and yellow.

Don't wear perfume, scented hairsprays, and scented deodorants. Don't burn scented candles outdoors.

Don't wave your arms and hands to swat bees and wasps away; this may only make them more defensive. Instead, get up slowly and walk away, taking your food and drink with you, until they've flown away.

Plan outdoor parties for early in the summer season. Bees and wasps are more aggressive in late summer and early fall, when their natural food supply starts to dwindle.

If you're allergic to insect stings, carry a sting emergency kit with you at all times.

If you experience shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, or other abnormal symptoms after a sting and do not have a sting kit, seek emergency medical treatment immediately. Anyone who is stung around the face and throat should receive medical treatment -- even if he or she is not allergic to bee stings.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2013

Safe Lifting

Despite the increased use of mechanical material handling equipment, many boxes, crates, bundles, and piles of materials still must be moved manually. This can lead to one of the most painful and costly work injuries employees can suffer - a back injury.

Whether material handling is your main job or just something that needs to be done occasionally, safety is very important. According to the National Safety Council, 400,000 workers suffer new back injuries each year. These injuries occur everywhere, not just in the stockrooms and warehouses.

Strains and sprains, fractures, and bruises are the most common injuries, and most of the time they are caused by unsafe work practices. No matter how knowledgeable or skilled we are, we all need to be reminded about ways to avoid injuries. Proper lifting is a learned skill that needs to be practiced to keep the proper lifting methods fresh in your mind.

Practice in lifting is as important as practice in first aid. You can practice even when you can't actually lift something. How? Before lifting, think your way through the procedure. Practice within your mind the proper steps in lifting the item.

Probably everyone has been told not to stoop over to lift. Your leg muscles, not your backbone, should do the work. Unfortunately, stooping over to lift is a habit we form during childhood. One way to break a habit is to form new ones. For example, if you stoop over to lift, retrain yourself to lift with your legs. Keep reminding yourself to do it this way until it becomes a new habit.

To lift a load to a point above your shoulders, plan ahead so you can rest the load about waist high, then change your grip and finish the lift. An even better idea is to get help.

Another common mistake is getting your fingers caught between the load and other surfaces. Lift the load a little so that one edge rests on the floor or table first, then let your hands slide up the sides so that when the full weight comes down, your fingers are not caught underneath. When walking through doorways or between machines, tuck your hands in or turn the load so that your fingers won't be trapped between the load and the other surface.

Finally, size up the job before you start the lift. If it is too big or awkward, don't be afraid to ask for help. After all, it is not just weight that makes a load a two-person job, it is also the size and shape.

To lift easily and safely, follow these six rules:

The feet - place one foot alongside the object to be lifted and the other behind it. This gives you stability and thrust.

The back - keep your back straight and use the sit-down position. Remember that means the back itself is straight, not necessarily vertical.

The chin - tuck in your chin so the neck and head continue the straight back line formed by your neck.

The palms - extend your fingers and hands around the object you are going to lift.

Arms and elbows - draw the load close to your body with your arms and elbows tucked into the sides of your body.

Bodyweight - position yourself so the weight of your body is centered over your feet. This provides a more powerful line of thrust and good balance.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2013

Common Sense Safety

There are a number of safety problems common to most workplaces and job sites that can be solved with a little common sense. Planning and thinking ahead can help eliminate most of these hazards. Take a close look at your workplace with these suggestions in mind.

Eliminate junk piles. Organize a clean up program to remove trash, broken parts, and scrap from work areas, walkways, storerooms, and neglected corners. Look for materials that have been stacked improperly. An unstable stack is a real danger to anyone who may be near if the material suddenly falls. Check such things as wood pallets, dock freight, storeroom boxes, construction materials and even office files to see that materials are stacked properly.

Examine all the operations of your workplace to determine if personal protective clothing is needed, then make it readily available. Ear protection, eye protection, hard hats, gloves, safety shoes or other protective clothing and equipment must be worn according to the hazard exposure.

Make sure all electric power tools are grounded. Protect yourself from electric shock by using tools with three-prong plugs, a ground-fault system or double insulation. Never cut off the ground plug on a three-prong plug. Check electrical cords and wires for any damage. Guard power tools and moving machine parts. Tools and equipment should never be operated with the guards or shields removed.

Inspect portable ladders to make sure they are secure and don't shake or wiggle. Nonslip feet are a must. If a ladder seems weak, get rid of it – don't let others use a defective ladder. Mark it defective and throw it away.

Fire extinguishers are a must and should be mounted properly, readily accessible, and in working order. Check fire regulations to make sure they are properly placed and the right type for your work area. When was the last time your fire extinguishers were tested? Extinguisher inspections should be made regularly then tagged to show when and who performed the tests.

Exits should be clearly marked with easy to read signs place above the doors. Signs with arrows should also be used to guide people to the exit if the layout of the workplace is confusing to those unfamiliar with your facility. Illuminated signs should be kept in working order at all times. Don't block exits or signs with vehicles or material. Another good idea is to mark doors that are not exits with "This is Not An Exit," "Restroom," "Storeroom" or "Closet." Put rails on all stairways. All stairs and truck steps should be in good shape with nonskid treads. Repair those that are damaged or chipped.

Safety meetings are one of the most important parts of a good safety program, so hold them regularly. Impress upon every worker that it's important that they take every precaution to keep the workplace safe. Both employee and employer attitudes toward safety provide a key to a successful safety program. Posters, handouts, and training programs are all part of our safety communication.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2013

Stay on Guard

Why do we have these brief safety talks? Why do we have to always think about safety? One of the major reasons is that in order to be safe, you have to be alert. You must be on guard at all times. By talking about safety you develop and strengthen safe work habits.

One of the worst things that you can do is let your guard down by becoming preoccupied with other things. We all have personal problems that plague us to one degree or another - health, bills, the future - and perhaps our worry about these problems led to illness or fatigue. Such preoccupation is a major factor in many on-the-job mishaps that are sometimes mistakenly labeled "freak accidents". When you become lost in thought, you are off guard. You've left your defenses down and are wide open for an accident. A blind or deaf person learns to compensate for the handicap by fine-tuning the other senses. When you are preoccupied, you are blind and deaf but don't know it. You are unguarded.

But how do you guard against preoccupation? How, indeed, can you detect that preoccupation has reached the point, either in yourself or others, that you're easy prey to hazards or hazardous conditions? If we knew the answer to this, it would mean a major breakthrough in the field of safety. It would be nice to be able to take a reading of someone's brain waves to see if they were lost in thought and open to an accident, but we don't have that ability. So we must do the best we can.

We do this by trying to make safety something that comes naturally to all of us, even when we are not consciously thinking about it. These safe work habits will then be so strong, that even if you become preoccupied at times, your safe habits will prevent you from having an accident. Reducing the possibility of accidents that are caused by a preoccupied mind is a matter of preventive safety, and that's one of the reasons we have talks like this one.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2013

THINK!

If you were asked to come up with a one-word definition of safety, or a one-word key to achieving it, in one word, what would be your reply? Would you suggest alertness, meaning always being ready for the unexpected? Would your vote be for skill - being especially adept? Would you define safety as experience, suggesting that the veteran never gets hurt? Perhaps you would settle on cooperation as the key to safety, meaning that it requires us to exercise patience and get along with our fellow worker. Or, after due deliberation, might you finally define safety by using the single word thinking?

Certainly alertness, skill, experience, and cooperation are all associated with safety, and contribute to it, but since they in turn require thought, they must be regarded as secondary characteristics. Some years ago, a prominent business executive constantly urged his staff to "Think!" He had THINK! signs posted in numerous locations and made the word virtually a corporate slogan - which became a symbol of his company's success. It can symbolize - and lead to - success in reducing accidents and injuries, as well.

It has often been said that about 90 percent of all accidents can be attributed to unsafe acts on the part of the worker, and failure to think before acting is the cause of practically all accidents in this category. For example:

A carpenter removes a guard from a table saw for the purpose of expediency; an injury results. The carpenter has not given thought to the original purpose of the guard and has suffered the unfortunate consequences.

A machinist, again for the sake of saving time, fails to don safety goggles for a project that will "only take a minute". Again, injury results because of the operator's failure to think of the possible negative result.

A truck driver, exercising legitimate right of way, is nevertheless involved in an accident. Why? Failure to realize that the other party involved might not grant that right of way, whether as the result of ignorance or impatience.

Many accidents can be averted if we will only discipline ourselves to think carefully about consequences before acting. When we THINK safety, we act safely.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

Keep *Alert* - and Prevent Falls

Rarely does anything happen as quickly as a fall. During a fall, our reflexes come into play and try to protect us. Often this quick muscular reaction can cause strains or sprains and, in some cases, body tension, which may result in a more serious injury than if the body were relaxed during the fall.

Since we have no control over our reflex actions, it is wise to be aware of objects and conditions that cause falls.

Some of the most common tripping hazards, or falls at the same level, are caused by objects left lying around and low protruding pipes, lumber, drawers and tool handles. Oil, water and other liquids on walking surfaces are especially dangerous. Spills should be cleaned up immediately or absorbent material spread over the area to reduce the slipping hazard.

Beware of ice and snow in trucks, docks and construction sites and when entering or leaving the plant. Falls from one level to another frequently involve falling off ladders, docks, scaffolds and roofs, through floor openings, or down stairways, which can often result in serious injury or even death.

In order to avoid such hazards, precautionary measures must be taken. Always use an approved ladder and never overextend yourself while working on it. Check it for safety grips or tie the bottom portion. It is important that the bottom of the ladder be placed 1/4 of its vertical height away from the building. For example, if the ladder is 16 feet high, the bottom of the ladder should be 4 feet from the building. The top of the ladder should be 36 inches higher than the level at which you are working.

Keep metal ladders away from live electrical wires. Perimeter guarding should be installed around open areas where ladders are being used. Scaffolds should have guardrails and toe boards.

Stairways are meant for walking, not running. Use hand rails, and if there is not enough light, report it. Stairways are to be kept uncluttered with the treads in good shape.

Being alert is one of the surest ways to reduce injuries caused by falls. This includes being aware of our environment, personal safety, and the safety of coworkers.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2013

Setting a Good Example

We sometimes seem to be living in a copycat world. If one automaker's leasing offer attracts consumer interest, every other car company will soon be riding the same bandwagon. No sooner does the latest buzz-word appear on one food or detergent label than the shelves are filled with products proclaiming "low-fat", "no enzymes", or "organic and biodegradable". It's clear, though, that what they're really trying to copy is success and profit.

Why mention this in a talk about safety? Because although we may occasionally be tempted to take an unsafe shortcut just because we've seen someone else do it and get away with it, we're more likely to do things safely because we've seen others doing them that way. That's one of the fringe benefits of doing things the safe way. We all profit from each other's good examples.

New employees certainly benefit by seeing operations conducted the safe way. As you all know from experience, people who are new on the job take a while to adjust and to discover how they fit into the overall operation. New employees who have never held a job before - or who were employed by a firm that had a weak safety program - will probably need considerable safety instruction. The company will provide instruction and training, of course, but important knowledge will also come from observing and talking to fellow workers. These newcomers' early impressions of you will be at least partially formed through these contacts and observations. Likewise, newcomers whose former employers did emphasize safety will probably think more of you personally if you measure up to the caliber of people they are accustomed to working with.

"Don't do as I do; do as I say" is a pretty tired expression. It became tired because we all have repeated it many times -- not just verbally but in our actions, which we all know speak louder than words. When we leave our safety glasses resting on our foreheads rather than in place over our eyes, or when we kick an empty milk carton under a bench rather than pick it up, we're not selling safety effectively. Our actions are saying: "I believe in wearing eye protection but not in protecting my eyes. And I know that trash can cause a tripping accident, but it isn't important enough to make me pick it up."

There's another angle to good examples. Too often people dress to impress others with their good taste rather than their knowledge of safety. Wearing rings, bracelets, and other ornaments is dangerous around machinery and on jobs in which it's possible for jewelry to catch on objects and cause injury to the wearer. Long sleeves, floppy pant legs, and long hair can be hazardous on some jobs, too. So we should always dress for the job. Our image as a fashion expert may suffer, but it'll give way to the more important and more beneficial image of safety.

Some of us probably feel we have already set good examples for safety, and perhaps we have. But consider just for a moment how, when we think about an accident, it's usually in regard to someone else. Accidents are a reality. Make your personal safety just as real, and you'll have a good chance of not becoming that "other person" to whom accidents are always happening.

We might also remember that our children someday will be entering the workforce. They, like the newcomers on the job, can benefit by our actions that exemplify safety-consciousness. Most of us try to do make a point of showing to our kids the safe way to cross streets or how to light matches when they're an appropriate age. If, through the years, they also learn from you how to use a ladder correctly, or that it's a good practice to keep tools in their proper places, or that there's a right way to lift things, your good example has given them an additional opportunity for a better, safer life in the future.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

Safe Backing

To many, safe backing of a vehicle seems like a common, ordinary task. Think about how a vehicle is designed, it is designed for forward movement. That is where our unobstructed view is concentrated. Unlike going forward, when we have to back we generally concentrate on our mirrors, thus leaving room for errors.

While concentration is the key to backing any vehicle, there are other aspects of backing that are just as important. In the Accident Prevention Handbook, there are references to a few of these. The #1 on any list is to avoid any unnecessary backing. If you must back, then do it upon your arrival. This is when the surroundings are freshest in your mind. Get into the habit of parking so when you are ready to leave you can simply pull forward. If you must go around the block looking for another place to park instead of backing in then, that's what we need to do.

When two or more employees are present, one of the employees must aid the driver/ drivers when backing any vehicle(s). When working alone and you must back proceed slowly and cautiously. Looking in all your mirrors for changing conditions.

No matter how long you have been stopped, before you proceed in backing up, get out and visually check behind your vehicle. Make sure no one pulled up between your mirrors or into a blind spot.

These methods are not new to anyone. They are the same tried and true methods that have been around for a long time. The only difference is we do not always practice safe backing or look for ways to eliminate it altogether.

We are still subject to our old habits. We need to make that concentrated effort in order reverse this habit and practice.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2013

Why Safety Belts?

To understand the value of safety belt use, it's important to understand some of the dynamics of a crash. Every motor vehicle crash is actually comprised of three collisions.

The Car's Collision

The first collision is known as the car's collision, which causes the car to buckle and bend as it hits something and comes to an abrupt stop. This occurs in approximately one-tenth of a second. The crushing of the front end absorbs some of the force of the crash and cushions the rest of the car. As a result, the passenger compartment comes to a more gradual stop than the front of the car.

The Human Collision

The second collision occurs as the car's occupants hit some part of the vehicle. At the moment of impact, *unbelted* occupants are still travelling at the vehicle's original speed. Just after the vehicle comes to a complete stop, these *unbelted* occupants will slam into the steering wheel, the windshield, or some other part of the vehicle interior. This is the human collision.

Another form of human collision is the person-to-person impact. Many serious injuries are caused by *unbelted* occupants colliding with each other. In a crash, occupants tend to move toward the point of impact, not away from it. People in the front seat are often struck by *unbelted* rear-seat passengers who have become high-speed projectiles.

The Internal Collision

Even after the occupant's body comes to a complete stop, the internal organs are still moving forward. Suddenly, these organs hit other organs or the skeletal system. This third collision is the internal collision and often causes serious or fatal injuries.

So, Why Safety Belts?

During a crash, properly fastened safety belts distribute the forces of rapid deceleration over larger and stronger parts of the person's body, such as the chest, hips and shoulders. The safety belt stretches slightly to slow your body down and to increase its stopping distance. The difference between the belted person's stopping distance and the *unbelted* person's stopping distance is significant. It's often the difference between life and death.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2013

Improving driver safety in the workplace

Unlike other workplaces, the roadway is not a closed environment. Although you can't always control roadway conditions, you can control how you react to them. According to NIOSH, employees need to take steps to improve their driving and increase their safety by taking the following precautions:

Always use your seat belt.

Do not conduct business on a cell phone while driving.

Obey speed limits and follow applicable hours-of-service regulations.

Learn strategies for recognizing and managing driver fatigue and in-vehicle distractions.

Follow safe driving practices on and off the job.

Make sure you have a valid driver's license and one that is appropriate for the type of vehicle you are driving.

Provide your employer complete and accurate records of driving performance on request.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2013

What Is Safety?

Is it someone with the title of safety inspector walking around the job site saying: "Don't do this. Don't do that. Wear your hard hat. Replace that machine guard"? Does safety mean danger and risk, or is it protection from injury or damage? It is all these things, of course, but it is also a great deal more.

Safety is a way of life -- meaning that it is not something one should have to stop and think about, but should be as familiar and about as automatic as breathing. Of course, breathing comes naturally from day one, but safety only becomes automatic as we gradually absorb the lessons learned from parents, teachers, books, and our own trial-and-error experiences. Most of us have by this time reached the point where certain habits of safety are ingrained - such as looking in all directions before crossing at a busy intersection. But to ensure the security that comes from making safety a way of life, on and off the job, we have to pay the price - which is cheap, compared to the dividends.

The price? It's the same as "how to get to Carnegie Hall," namely, practice, practice, and more practice. This means that until we have made safety a part of everything we do in our lives, we need to force ourselves to think how to do it in such a way that neither we nor anyone else will suffer harm as a result. This can be done. After all, consider the hazardous jobs many men and women work at every day without harm. On the other hand, consider some of the sports we watch, either live or on television, in which - let's admit it - some of the fascination is the element of danger we know is present. Surely, no one steps onto the soccer field or into the racing car at the Indianapolis speedway without years of practice and training in which safety awareness was an integral part. That preparation makes it possible to concentrate on the goals of the particular game or race without consciously thinking about safety. But we know that accidents, sometimes dreadful ones, do happen on the field or the track, with severe injuries or even death as the result.

Does this mean that safety training and practice are not enough to keep us injury free at our jobs either? Not necessarily. There's an element of competition in sports -- even those like mountain climbing or hang gliding, where you're competing only against nature or against your own previous accomplishment. And the athlete, having learned all the relevant safety lessons but also aware of the risks, chooses to take the chance and go for the win. Here at work, however, we're all on the same team. We may want to surpass a former production record or make our widgets faster, better, and cheaper than Brand X -- but we don't do it by taking chances with our own safety and that of the co-workers who are our teammates. Instead, we continue to think about safety whenever a work decision has to be made. We conscientiously observe the safety rules and consciously practice the safe behavior we've learned. We wear the safety glasses, clear the debris from the aisles, mop up spills promptly, and read the label on any chemical we're going to use.

If this hasn't already become automatic behavior, it will with further practice - and as with any accomplishment, some people may need more practice than others. At any rate, once we have all paid the necessary price of practicing safety, we will all share the dividend - a workplace in which the odds against our being injured on the job have become greater and greater.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2013

Knuckle Down on Hand Safety

Just for one day - say, tomorrow - try paying attention to what your hands do. Start from the time you turn off the alarm clock. Really notice what you do with your hands while you're shaving, washing, dressing, eating, driving, working, writing, etc. Make yourself conscious of your hands all day long. Notice the sensitivity of your fingertips. Note the jobs your hands do that need a light, careful touch and those that take strength. Let yourself discover how wonderful your hands really are.

Then picture what your life would be like if you lost even the partial use of a hand. Can you afford to take your hands for granted? They come just one pair to a customer. They're the only hands you'll ever have, so take care of them.

You don't have to have a serious accident to temporarily lose the full use of your hands. Think back to any time when you had a relatively minor injury such as a torn fingernail or a cut that made it painful or awkward to freely use your hand or fingers. Do you remember how helpless you felt trying to write your name, use a knife and fork, button your shirt, or do any of the simple, everyday things that you normally take for granted?

An informal survey of a number of employees who suffered hand injuries revealed that they knew their jobs. They knew the job hazards, too. But in one case after another, the trouble was that they forgot. They just didn't think.

Knowing the right way to do a job is important. But just knowing is not enough.

In general, handling materials is one of the major sources of hand injuries. These accidents don't have to happen. Most hand safety rules, when you take a good look at them, are only common sense. Let's go over a few.

You know how easy it is for wet soap to slip right out of your hands. For the same reason, it makes good sense to wipe off any object that is wet, greasy, slippery, or dirty before you pick it up. Also, before you handle any material, look it over for slivers, burrs, jagged edges, and rough surfaces.

Especially important, watch out for pinch points. The majority of hand injuries happen when your hand and fingers get caught between two objects.

Keep your fingers in the clear when you're setting down a heavy object, when you're piling material, when you're handling slings and chains, and when you're using tools, such as pry bars, levers, and wrenches.

Watch out for points of contact - where the teeth of moving gears mesh together, around all moving equipment, and anyplace else where two objects meet.

Hands are naturally exposed to injury, probably more than any other part of the body, simply because we use them so often. That's all the more reason to develop hand consciousness and to protect them.