



Editor's Briefs, Tyler.Nguyen@esa.sccgov.org

“Safety for the aging workforce”, what does the phrase really mean anyway?

You have no doubt heard many times that raising safety awareness is key to preventing accidents. Let's examine a definition that is commonly used in our profession. Safety awareness is that state of mind, or precaution, that workers take with them mentally before, during and after they do a job.

In my organization, I joke to the associates all the time that we get to have our “fifteen minutes of fame” to talk about safety on-the-job to new workers—every other month—when they join the company. The good thing about this orientation is that we are scheduled on the agenda to speak immediately after the chief executive officer. That's the lingering effect that I coined our “fifteen minutes of fame.” Better yet, workers who get safety training from day one on-the-job from their supervisor, are being given a strong message that safety is important, a high priority, or a company value. This is the most effective way to make safety impact, through your front-line supervisors.

Fast forward to the graying part after employees become seasoned veterans. Research indicates that the top injuries to older workers include: falls due to loss of balance or slower reaction time, sprains from less flexibility, overexertion in heat or cold, and, injuries build up from years of doing the same tasks.

The solution? Ergonomics. That's what!

Same as it ever was, fitting the tasks to workers is what we should strive to do at all times, for any workforce. The benefits of treating the workforce generic yet custom are many. The adage saying still rings true that “one size does not fit all.” Use any opportunity you have to recommend solutions that help put our fellow workers and their body postures into the neutral zone, saving one injury at a time.

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

To reserve a seat via e-mail, please send your name, telephone number and email address to:

reservations@assesj.org

February 12: Lab Safety: This presentation will be made by Mr. Larry Gibbs MEd, MPH, CIH who is the Associate Vice Provost for the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) department of Stanford University which has over 2500 laboratories on its campus involved in research ranging from basic sciences to nanomaterials to medicine and clinical research. Larry is also a lecturer at the Stanford Institute for the Environment. Mr. Gibbs is a Certified Industrial Hygienist with over 25 years of experience in developing, implementing and managing EHS programs. He has authored over 25 publications on EHS management, and co-authored two books. He is currently Chairman of the ACGIH®, on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Environmental Managers (NAEM), and is active in the American Industrial Hygiene Association, where he founded the Laboratory Health and Safety Committee. He has served on the Board of the American Biological Safety Association (ABSA). Topics to be covered include written programs (chemical hygiene plan), training, personal protective equipment, permits and engineering controls

March 11: Lock Out Tag Out (LOTO): LOTO was the number one violation cited by OSHA in manufacturing in 2006. Mr. Jay Jamali, CSP, CHMM, CHCM who is the EHS Director for Enviro Safetech will present on how to develop and implement an effective LOTO program as well as develop equipment specific LOTO procedures. State of the art LOTO devices will be demonstrated during this presentation. Jay has over 25 years of experience in EHS and has been presenting on this topic at the ASSE national conference for the past 5 years. Jay has developed and implemented multiple LOTO programs and has been involved in the development of over 2000+ equipment specific LOTO procedures.





COMPLIANCE vs. INJURY PREVENTION by Larry Wilson, larry@electrolab.ca

<http://www.safetyxchange.org/>

Page 1 of 2

I know, I know. Complying with the law and preventing injury are supposed to be one and the same. But guess what? They're not. And everybody knows it. A safety director I met at a recent conference summed it up perfectly: "I'd love to be able to do some stuff that would really reduce injuries," he said to me. "Unfortunately, I'm so busy with compliance and audits right now that I just don't have the time."

Putting the Compliance Cart before the Safety Horse

The reason we have OSHA laws is to prevent injury. But the great irony is that the laws have become a distraction. We're so wrapped up in getting all the details of compliance right that we tend to overlook what should be obvious safety risks. I mean, why is it that an experienced and certified safety professional performing a compliance audit can spot a container on the back shelf without a label during a compliance audit, but not notice that everyone - and I mean everyone - is violating an ergonomic procedure on the production floor (pulling carts instead of pushing them). Could it be that the former would constitute an OSHA violation and the latter wouldn't? If so, this is sad - especially when you consider that the number one injury at this facility of 2,650 was and is shoulder strains.

A Sad State of Affairs

How on earth did we get here? How could we ever have let anything become more important to us than preventing injury? We should be dedicated to preventing the causes of accidents - rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency. Instead, we're spending our hours dotting "i"'s and crossing "t"'s.

Why? Perhaps it's because we've become more afraid of the lawyers and the government than the injuries or fatalities. If this is true about you, then I want to share a story with you.

Putting Compliance vs. Prevention in Perspective

I was asked to speak at a conference for logging contractors on Vancouver Island. Mark, the person who introduced me, was the operations manager from one of the major forest products companies in the area. He knew there were some owners and superintendents mixed into the audience of 300 hand-fallers. This was his introduction:

"Guys, we've had five potentially fatal close calls so far this year." [two-second pause] "I don't know if any of you have ever had to knock on the door and tell the wife of one of your employees that her husband is dead - but I have."

What he said next that really got to me. "And what I've found, or what I've found works best - is to just come right out and say 'Your husband was killed in an accident today.'" [one-second pause] "But," he continued, "that's not the worst of it - having to stay there until another friend or family member comes over, that's the worst part, because they start yelling, then crying, then they hug you, then they pound your chest or try to hit you, all the while the kids are crying and screaming, she's crying and screaming. And all you can do is stand there and wait. Wait until that relative or friend gets there...it may only be 15 or 20 minutes," And he looks over the crowd. "But I guarantee you that it will be the longest 15 minutes of your life."

Mark is a big man. Big - 6 feet and about 225 pounds. Strong. And sharp as a tack. He looks at the group and says one last thing, "I don't care how tough you think you are, I don't care what you've been though on your own, you won't want to ever, ever go through that again, you will never want to spend another 15-20 minutes like that again. Ever."

Then he shakes his head, and in a low voice he says, "I've had to do it so many times, that I can't even tell you the exact number - I can just tell you what I've found is the best way to do it." Then he introduces me. I could barely talk. All I kept thinking about was "The best way I've found to do this...The best way..." He's had to do this so many times that he knows what works best.





COMPLIANCE vs. INJURY PREVENTION by Larry Wilson, larry@electrolab.ca

<http://www.safetyxchange.org/>

Page 2 of 2

Conclusion

Now ask yourself, if you were Mark would you be interested in compliance or injury prevention - audit scores or inattention? A moment's inattention with a forklift, chainsaw or skidder can lead to a fatality. A bad audit score doesn't seem so significant when you're on your way to a funeral. Look, I'm not saying that compliance audits aren't important. I'm just suggesting, urging, that you put them in proper perspective. Next week, I'll elaborate on how.

Complying with the laws is supposed to make us safer. Perversely, though, compliance - at least the administrative part of it, namely, the compliance audit - has become an end in itself, a distraction from safety. Last week, I vented my frustration with this. Today, I'd like to finish the thought and put the compliance audit into what I consider is its proper perspective.

The Shortcomings of Audit Scores

Prevention is far more important than audit scores. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying compliance audits aren't a good thing. It's just that when push comes to shove, and it will whether your work involves cutting down 200-foot trees with 3-foot chainsaws on 45-degree hills or less risky operations - injury prevention is what it's all about.

And if prevention is our priority, then we should focus on the real cause of accidents - inattention and human error. Compliance audits mostly focus on equipment and mechanical components. Maybe one percent of all acute injuries are caused by such things. The other 99% are the result of inattention and error.

If you don't believe it, just think about all the injuries you've suffered in your life - the cuts, bruises, bumps and scrapes. Why did they happen? 'Because a machine malfunctioned? Or were they the result of a momentary lapse of concentration or error?

Audit scores don't cure these problems. They have never helped an employee pay more attention when his eyes or mind wasn't on the task at hand. They have never helped an employee drive a motor vehicle, operate a power tool or lock out a machine more safely.

Dealing with Inattention and Human Error

So, when are you going to deal with inattention and human error?

I don't mean just telling your employees to be more careful. Nor do I mean simply warning them not to get complacent. Heck, if you're going to do that, why not also tell them not to get any older while you're at it.

Dealing with inattention requires teaching your employees how states like rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency cause the vast majority of injury-causing errors like "eyes not on task, mind not on task, being in the line of fire and somehow losing your balance, traction or grip."

However, even that isn't enough. You also have to teach them about what I call the four "Critical Error Reduction Techniques." And perhaps most importantly, you must motivate them to put some effort into improving their skills, habits and techniques.

If you're committed, this is easy enough to do. It takes about 10 hours spread out over 10 weeks. The reward: You can expect a 50, 60 or as much as 90% decrease in recordables. You can also expect to achieve decreases in first aid incidents, off the job injuries and most importantly - if you're trying to prevent fatalities - motor vehicle accidents.

How many plant audits do you think you would you would have to do to prevent a fatal automobile accident?

Conclusion

So, let me ask the question again, when are you going to deal with injury prevention?

I know, I know... just as soon as you get done with your compliance audit.





Law prohibits loose lithium batteries in airline passengers' checked baggage

Airline passengers are no longer allowed to carry loose lithium batteries in checked luggage.

The new rule, issued by the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, is designed to reduce the risk of lithium battery fires.

Safety officials say the regulation is necessary because lithium batteries are considered hazardous materials and can overheat and ignite in certain conditions. Recent testing by the Federal Aviation Administration found current aircraft cargo fire suppression systems would not be able to stop a fire that ignited in flight.

Common consumer electronics such as travel cameras, cell phones, and most laptop computers are still allowed in carry-on and checked luggage. However, the rule limits individuals to bringing only two extended-life spare rechargeable lithium batteries, such as laptop and professional audio/video/camera equipment lithium batteries in carry-on baggage.

"Doing something as simple as keeping a spare battery in its original retail packaging or a plastic zip-lock bag will prevent unintentional short-circuiting and fires," said Krista Edwards, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

In addition to the new rule, PHMSA is working with the FAA, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the battery and airline industries, airline employee organizations, testing laboratories, and the emergency response communities to increase public awareness about battery-related risks and developments. These useful safety tips are highlighted at the public website: <http://safetravel.dot.gov>

Chapter Officers 2007-08

President Mira Rubin

Past-President Lou Cuneo

President-Elect Jay Jamali

Treasurer Mostafa Pournejat

Delegate Jack J. Hahn

Delegate Fred Norton

Membership Jim Beeby

Jobs Joe Barsky

Government Affairs
John Steele

Newsletter Editor
Tyler Nguyen

Webmaster Joe Barsky

