

THE

CONNECTION

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Safety Excuses Cliches Only Add to Accidents

"Oh, you know Sue, she's accident prone."

"That Jim, he's just careless. Anyone else would have known that walkway was slippery." Have you ever heard workers give these types of excuses when explaining how an accident occurred?

Here are some things to consider in the face of safety excuses:

"She's accident prone." Has she been hurt so many times because she lacks the necessary skills and knowledge? Is it because the machine, tool, or procedure is unsafe? Is there a work attitude problem?

"He was Careless." How was he careless? Did he fail to replace a guard? Did he not wear the required personal protection equipment? Did he hold the tool in the wrong manner? Was he running down the aisles or down the steps? Was he looking away from the work at some

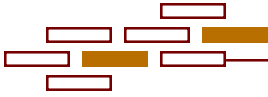
critical time? In some cases, an employee trips on a loose item on the floor and is injured, and someone calls it carelessness. But how did that item get on the floor? Was it dropped, and if so did the person who dropped it realize what happened? How many other employees walked by the item, saw it, and failed to pick it up?

"It was just one of those things." The common inference in this cliché is that accidents are bound to happen, but keep this in mind: Accidents will happen if you let them. In the overwhelming majority of accidents, a thorough investigation will bring the facts to light: that the accident was predictable and that more could have been done to preclude or significantly lessen the chances of occurrence. This just-one-of-those-things statement is sometimes used to explain clearly avoidable accidents, such as electrical shock, burns from chemicals, falls from heights, and finger and hand injuries resulting from the hazards of moving machinery.

"He was just doing it for five minutes." There is a well-known case at OSHA of an employee who was standing behind a co-worker who was operating an abrasive wheel. The employee standing behind caught a chip in the eye, resulting in permanent blindness. The victim was in a dangerous position for only a very short period. The amount of time spent without proper protective equipment or working in an unsafe manner make no difference at all because accidents can happen, literally in the blink of an eye.

In many instances, employees have been severely injured when completing one last task just before clocking out, or when they had only one specific, short task to perform.





No Substitute for Safety

It happens all the time. You need to get something done, and the tool or equipment isn't available. This is where a little creativity with substitutes can save you time and energy - or it can get you into big trouble. Before you use a "make-do," stop and think. Is the substitute really going to save you that much time? Is it really a safe replacement for the right piece of equipment?

For instance, on a construction site, a favorite substitute for almost anything is a cinder block. You can always depend on cinder blocks - to break at the wrong time. Everyone has a story about cinder blocks. There was the pipefitter who was trying to set up a scaffold in a stairway. Cinder blocks under two legs of the scaffold made it fit perfectly. The scaffold was just right - until one of the cinder blocks shattered and dumped him and scaffold down the stairs. Putting cinder blocks under heavy equipment is an invitation to crushed toes when blocks give way. Cinder blocks may make great bookshelves, but you can't trust them on the job.

Need another scaffold plank? Resist the impulse to visit the scrap lumber pile or use lumber intended for another purpose. Scaffold planks should meet strict specifications and be tested before they are used.

You use many tools in the course of your work day. It's your job to know which tool is right for which task. Always take the time to properly set up and use tools the way they were intended, even if it means setting up a special tool for a small job. And the same goes for protective equipment. Use the right eye protection for the job you're doing, not whatever goggles are in your apron pocket or on loan from your buddy. If you work around loud noise, cotton wads or other materials are no substitute for

approved earplugs or earmuffs.

Most of the time the best rule for substitutes is to stay away from them. If you want to be creative, take an art class in your spare time. But if you must use a substitute, a good rule to follow is to make sure it's stronger and safer than whatever it's replacing.



You've heard time and again that exercise is good for your heart. But do you know why?

In simple terms, your heart is a muscle. And like all muscles, it grows stronger when you exercise it. But if you look a little deeper, you can see even more clearly why exercise is important to heart health.

Every time your heart beats, it sends oxygen-rich blood to your body's cells. When you're exercising, your heart pumps faster to increase the amount of oxygen your muscles get. When you're at rest, your muscles don't need as much oxygen, and your heart can slow to normal.

The more fit your heart becomes, the less effort it requires to pump this blood through your body. A strong heart will:

Sustain a rapid heart rate during exercise for longer without becoming weak or strained.

Pump more blood with each beat, both at rest and during exercise.

Beat slower when you're at rest, giving your heart a chance to rest between beats.

A strong, healthy heart also has a lower risk of heart disease. In contrast, a rarely exercised heart needs to work harder, experiences more strain, and may leave you at a significant risk of heart disease.

Protect Against an Invisible

Occupational Danger:

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a common industrial hazard resulting from the incomplete burning of natural gas and any other material containing carbon such as gasoline, kerosene, oil, propane, coal, or wood. One of the most common sources of workplace exposure is the internal combustion engine.

CO is harmful when breathed because it displaces oxygen in the blood and deprives the head, brain, and other vital organs of oxygen. Large amounts of CO can overcome a person in minutes without warning, causing loss of consciousness and even death.

Beside tightness across the chest, initial symptoms of CO poisoning may include headache, fatigue, dizziness, drowsiness, or nausea. During prolonged or high exposures, symptoms may worsen and include vomiting, confusion, and collapse, in addition to loss of consciousness and muscle weakness.

If caught in time, CO poisoning can be reversed. However, even with recovery, acute poisoning may result in permanent damage to areas of the body that require a lot of oxygen, such as the head and brain.

Employee Prevention Measures

Play an active role in reducing the risk of CO poisoning by taking the following steps:

Report any situation that might cause CO to accumulate.

Be alert to ventilation problems, especially in enclosed areas where gases of burning fuels may be released.

Promptly report complaints of dizziness, drowsiness, or nausea.

Avoid overexertion if you suspect CO poisoning, and leave the contaminated area.

We welcome your comments and suggestions about the Connection. To submit articles and/or topic ideas, please call: (269) 629-9708 or send to P.O. Box 460, Richland, Mi 49083. Also visit our website at: www.CLS-Skilledlabor.com