

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, workplace accidents occur every day. There are many reasons for why an accident occurs, and while it is impossible to completely eliminate the chances of an accident occurring within the workplace, there are things that you and your coworkers can do to help minimize the risks. In this lesson, we will cover what some of the common reasons for accidents in the workplace are and safety tips that you and coworkers can use to help minimize your chances of being hurt while on the job.



WHAT SOME OF THE COMMON REASONS FOR ACCIDENTS OCCURRING IN THE WORKPLACE ARE

There are many reasons for why accidents occur while we are our work. These include, but may not be limited to:

- An employee's behavior, such as:
 - Taking shortcuts
 - Being overconfident
 - Starting a task without having all of the instructions
 - Poor housekeeping
 - Ignoring safety policies and procedures
 - Ignoring or bypassing safety devices
 - Being mentally distracted from your work
 - Failing to take the time to pre-plan your work
 - Giving into peer pressure
 - Failing to communicate with others
 - Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at work
 - Becoming complacent
 - Becoming distracted
 - Lack of participation in safety trainings
- Environmental factors, such as:
 - Poor lighting
 - Ventilation issues
 - High noise levels
 - Extreme temperatures
 - Wet or slippery surfaces
- Equipment and machinery factors, such as:
 - Malfunctioning equipment
 - Lack of regular maintenance
 - Poorly designed tools
 - Removal or modification of safety features, such as guards
- Improper handling of materials, such as:
 - Improperly storing or stacking materials
 - Mishandling chemicals or other hazardous materials
 - Unclear or mislabeled of chemicals or other items

SAFETY TIPS FOR MINIMIZING ACCIDENTS WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

Employee Behaviors

How you and your coworkers approach your work tasks can play a vital role in minimizing accidents within the workplace. To do this, you should:

- Become familiar with your company's safety policies and procedures.
- Participate in pre-planning activities for your work tasks, including the identification of hazards.
 - Concerns or hazards that you have about a work task or process should be discussed with your supervisor.
- Participate in your company's safety trainings.
 - If you miss a training lesson or session, speak with your supervisor about how you can get copies of the materials or when the next training will be.
 - You should receive training prior to starting a new work task or process.
- Where applicable, make sure that you have copies or access to written instructions or procedures for your work task.
 - If it seems like instructions or procedures are missing something, speak with your supervisor.
 - Additionally, you should review manufacturer-provided materials, such as owner's or operator's manuals, when they are available.
- Ask questions when you are unsure about something or need further clarification.
 - Remember, you cannot get answers if you don't ask the question.
- Do NOT remove, modify, or otherwise ignore manufacturer-provided or after-market safety devices.
 - These devices are not there to be an inconvenience. They are there to help minimize the chances of you being injured.
- Keep your work area as clean as possible.
 - A dirty work area can increase the chances of an accident occurring.
 - Use all cleaning products in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Use the proper communication methods when working with others.
 - For example, if you are helping someone who is driving a vehicle with blind spots, make sure that you both understand how communication is going to work between you, such as using hand signals or radios.
- Stay focused on the task that you are performing.
 - While it would be nice to say that we are all multi-taskers, our brains tend to work best when we are focusing our attention on one thing at a time.
 - If you have to shift your focus, for instance, having to talk to someone while using a saw, you can either ask the person to wait while you complete your task or take a moment to stop the saw and give the person your full attention before starting the saw again once your conversation is finished.
- Do NOT take shortcuts or rush.
 - A few saved seconds or minutes don't really mean much when you or someone else gets hurt.
 - If you think that a task can be completed in a more efficient way, you should speak with your supervisor and conduct a hazard analysis to see if the changes will be safe.
- If you see someone about to perform an unsafe act, speak with them or immediately notify your supervisor.
 - Ignoring the action could result in the person or you getting hurt.
- Keep in mind that anything can happen at any time, so even if you have performed a task a hundred or a thousand times, it does not mean that nothing will go wrong eventually.

Environmental Factors

In addition to your and your coworkers' behaviors, there may be things that exist in the environment either naturally or have been added that can increase the chances of an accident occurring. In these situations, you can help minimize the chances of an accident occurring by:

- Making sure there is adequate lighting for you or others to see.
 - If you notice that there isn't enough light, you should immediately notify your supervisor and/or maintenance department.
- Where you are working with chemicals or other airborne contaminants or in confined spaces, you should assure that you either have proper ventilation or the correct respirator for the product and task.
 - If you have concerns about ventilation or respiratory protection, please speak with your supervisor.
- Where there is excessive noise due to tools or equipment, you should wear the appropriate hearing protection for your job task.
- Make sure that you are dressed appropriately for the environments that you will be working in.
 - If you start to feel symptoms associated with either heat or cold stress, notify your supervisor immediately.
- Inspect your work area for spilled liquids, debris, cords, or other items that could make the floor wet or slippery.
 - Clean up spilled liquids and debris in accordance with your company policies and procedures.
 - Make sure that cords are kept out of walkways and other high-traffic areas whenever possible.
 - Slow down when walking in wet or slippery areas in outdoor environments.

Equipment and Machinery Factors

Depending on your work environment, you and your coworkers may be required to use different types of equipment and machines. These items can expose you and your coworkers to certain hazards while they are being operated or when maintenance is being performed. When working with equipment and machinery, you should:

- Inspect them for signs of visible damage and missing or modified parts in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
 - You should not use any damaged or other compromised equipment or machines.
- Become familiar with all of the safety devices, guards, and/or warning systems that may come with or be added to your equipment or machinery.
 - Depending on the age of the machine, after-market safety devices, guards, or warning systems may be installed at a later date to help minimize the chances of an injury occurring while working with the piece of equipment or machine.
 - If you have any questions regarding any safety devices, guards, and/or warning systems that are on your piece of equipment or machine, please speak with your supervisor.
 - Safety devices, guards, and/or warning systems should not be removed or modified.
- Assure that equipment and machinery is being maintained in accordance with the manufacturer-specified or recommended timetables.
 - The timetables will usually be laid in the owner's or operator's manual.
- Where applicable, make sure that all company-required lockout/tagout/blockout procedures have been completed in accordance with your company's policies and procedures and the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use the appropriate tools for the job.
 - Where feasible, use tools that have been ergonomically designed to help minimize the chances of you developing musculoskeletal disorders.

Material Handling Factors

Another thing that can introduce hazards to the work environment is how materials are used and stored. When using and storing materials, you should do the following:

- Inspect shelving, cabinets, or other storage equipment for visible signs of damage or anything else that could indicate compromised stability.
 - Report damaged or unstable shelving, cabinets, or other storage equipment to your supervisor.
- Check the weight limit for storage equipment.
 - Many accidents happen because shelving, cabinets, or other storage equipment are overloaded.
- Make sure that incompatible chemicals and substances are stored away from each other.
 - When incompatible chemicals and/or substances mix together, it can result in fires, the creation of toxic vapors or fumes, and other dangerous situations.
 - If you are not sure whether something is compatible or not, please refer to the safety data sheets (SDS) or speak with your supervisor.
 - Chemicals and other substances should be handled and stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Assure that items, such as boxes, cans, etc., are properly stacked in accordance with your company's policies and procedures.
 - Improperly stacked items can easily topple over, which can lead to injuries or accidents occurring.
 - Additionally, items should NOT be stacked too high, as the structure can become unstable.
- Make sure that all materials are stored in areas that are clear of walkways, entrances, exits, emergency equipment, and electrical panels.
- Where applicable, make sure that materials are properly labeled and that labels are in good condition and are legible.
 - Missing, damaged, or illegible labels should be reported to your supervisor and replaced as needed.
- All chemicals and substances should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
 - Where applicable, mixing of chemicals should only be done in well-ventilated areas or in designated mixing areas.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, accidents can occur at anytime and anywhere. To help minimize the chances of an accident occurring while at work, there are a number of things that you and your coworkers can do. You and your coworkers can participate in all of your company's safety policies and procedures by following them, attending trainings and safety meetings, notifying your supervisor of hazardous conditions that they may be unaware of, and so on. Additionally, if you see someone about to perform an unsafe act, speak with them, or if you do not feel comfortable speaking with them directly, immediately notify a supervisor. Remember that everyone contributes to a safe work environment.