



TOOLBOX TALKS

Little Things Count

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You've often heard the expression, "It's the little things that count." This is true whether you're talking about human relations, expenses that are piling up, or safety.

Maybe we should amend the expression to say, "In safety, particularly, it's the little things that count." Hopefully, we all are on the lookout for big hazards that might maim or disable us, but commonplace things can also be brutal.

Recently an organization became very concerned when its disabling injury toll showed a big increase during a 12-month period. The management began to check out such things as vapor emissions, flammable liquids, heavy equipment failures, and other high-hazard areas.

Well, you've probably already guessed what they found. The high hazard areas were not where the problems were. Those areas were all commendably guarded, and all proper precautions had been taken. But it was the "little things" that were at the bottom of the most of the trouble.

Injuries were being caused by the floors that everyone walked over, stairs that most people used, hand tools that were used regularly, and similar items.

It is not always to develop and maintain a safety awareness of hazards that can produce disastrous results. They are obvious and easily recognized, and usually a special effort is put forth to keep these major problems under control.

But the commonplace hazards which result in disabling injuries are the products of ordinary, non-exceptional situations. The repetition of daily operations can distract our attention from the small things that are also important to our safety.

The commonplace accidents we are talking about generally fall into categories such as these: those resulting from failure to apply an established procedure, taking shortcuts, or employing questionable practices because they worked o.k. before.

When we stop to think about it, we can all recall some commonplace hazards that we are confronted with and have grown accustomed to. Tools that have not been stored in their proper place may form hazards that we sidestep every day before finally tripping over them.

Uneven spots in the floor, use of defective ladders, defective stools or chairs – all of these hazards, and many others; can go undetected without constant safety awareness. These items should be spotted and reported to your supervisor.

Another example of little things that add up is minor injuries that go untreated. There are many recorded cases of people who have received routine cuts or scratches and have not had them treated, which resulted in infections. This in turn, caused lost income as well as a lot of suffering.

There are several generally accepted methods of preventing job accidents, all or any of which might have to be used. The first is to eliminate the hazard from the machinery, the procedure, or whatever else is harboring an unsafe condition. Secondly, the hazard may be eliminated by properly guarding it. Personal protective equipment might also shield the employee from the hazard.

Don't take safety for granted. Watch out for the little things, too. They all add up.



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