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- Disseminate information beyond those immediately affected by incidents.
- Good organizational communication is key to safety.
- Planning cannot only keep the team safe, but it can improve its performance and the outcome of the task.

How to Learn from Accidents

From Safety.BLR.com

An accident or injury is an unwelcome event at any workplace. But organizations that take strategic steps can use information about the incident to prevent similar events in the future.

Hernani Veloso Neto of the University of Porto, Portugal, has published research on the subject in the March issue of the *International Journal of Human Factors and Ergonomics*. He identified three obstacles that stand in the way of treating workplace accidents as a source of what he calls *useable knowledge*.

According to Veloso Neto, the first challenge is fundamental structural barriers. These are related to organizational issues, such as whether news about accidents is disseminated beyond those immediately affected by the incident.

The second obstacle is “inter-individual” barriers, for example, communications between line managers and staff. And, barriers caused by the behaviors and response of those directly involved in the accident are the third barrier.

The key is a knowledge system that focuses on internal and external case studies and encourages the reporting of accidents, causes, and outcomes across the entire organization.

“To learn from accident experiences, organizations must create mechanisms to foster knowledge from the onset and to elicit changes based on that information,” Veloso Neto concludes. He says if such resources are not exploited, barriers will remain in place and accidents will be repeated.



Pre-Task Planning

Pre-task planning meetings are held immediately prior to performing a specific task.

Since different tasks have different durations it is possible for there to be only one meeting on one day and several on another. The team discusses the work to be performed and the hazards that are likely to be encountered. Then the team modifies the work plan to try to eliminate hazards or means are discussed by which the hazards can be avoided or protected against. Research results have shown that work employing pre-task planning throughout a project process have better productivity and safety performances. The pre-task planning process brings the team into the decision-making process that directly impacts their own safety performances. The involvement of all employees can have a dramatic impact on decreasing injury rates.





Housekeeping Suggestions

- Keep floors, stairways, aisles, and other passageways clear.
- Close drawers.
- Put tools away.
- Stack materials carefully.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Report any loose or broken flooring.
- Keep food and beverages away from the work area.
- Properly dispose of all trash.
- Keep paper and other combustibles away from lights.
- Prevent dirt, dust or grease buildup on machinery.
- Keep containers of flammables closed.
- Don't place tools or equipment on the edges of shelves.

OSHA Focusing on Key Workplace Areas

On March 12, 2014, Tom Galassi, OSHA's Director of Enforcement Programs (DEP) spoke out about key issues in enforcement. Although OSHA has no regulations on the subjects, it routinely uses the General Duty Clause to cite employers for alleged workplace violence, ergonomics and heat hazard violations.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics continues to be a focus for OSHA. The Agency expects to conduct approximately 240 ergonomics inspections this year, which is consistent with statistics from past years. Nursing homes and other health care facilities continue to be a focus of OSHA's enforcement efforts in this area.

Workplace Violence

OSHA has already issued 3 workplace violence citations under the General Duty Clause this year, and has 29 open workplace violence inspections right now. Mr. Galassi stressed that night retail businesses, health care facilities, and social services should ensure they are taking steps to protect workers from workplace violence.

Heat

With summer just around the corner, OSHA will be taking a hard look at heat stress. Last year the Agency received 180 non-formal employee complaints relating to heat and conducted 34 fatality inspections out of 266 inspections overall. Before the heat hits, employers with outdoor employees should take steps to develop and train employees on heat-related illnesses and injuries.

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Good Housekeeping Matters

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspectors and safety consultants agree that you can get a good idea about safety and health practices at a business by walking in the main entrance. There's a strong correlation between a clean, orderly workplace and a safe, successful organization. Good housekeeping matters because it:

- Reduces accidents and fire hazards;
- Improves emergency response times;
- Helps maintain safe, healthy work conditions;
- Saves time, money, materials, space, and effort;
- Improves productivity and quality;
- Boosts morale; and
- Reflects an image of a well-run, successful organization.

OSHA inspectors will not hesitate to cite violations of its requirement that "all places of employment, passageways, storerooms, and service rooms shall be kept clean and orderly and in a sanitary condition."

