

HAZARD AWARENESS - THE LITTLE THINGS COUNT

Most of us have probably heard the old saying, "It's the little things that count."



There are many small things that influence our lives, and ignoring them can sometimes have serious or disastrous consequences – particularly when it comes to safety.

We have all been trained to watch out for the big hazards that could harm us, but the little ones can sometimes cause serious injuries too.

“One company became very concerned when it’s AFR or ‘accident frequency rate’ showed a marked increase over a relatively short period of time. Management began an in-depth check of systems, equipment, and material that they rightly identified and considered to potentially hazardous: heavy and moving plant and machinery, toxic substances and chemicals, machine guarding, etc.”

“To everyone's surprise, none of these things were the cause of their accidents. Chemicals were properly labelled and stored; machines were in good repair and properly guarded; the extract ventilation systems, fire alarms, respiratory protective equipment, etc., were all in good working order. Instead, accidents stemmed from a variety of "little things" that had been ignored until an injury occurred.”

“For example, they found that serious falls had been caused by:

- A puddle of oil on the floor from a leaking forklift. No one had poured absorbent granules on the spill because it was "too small to worry about." But it wasn't too small to cause a passing employee slip and fall when he didn't notice it. (Furthermore, the leaking forklift needs to be repaired so this accident won't happen again.)
- A box of supplies that had been left on the floor in front of a shelf, instead of properly stored. It had been walked around dozens of times before someone finally tripped over it.
- A ladder that was placed in front of an outward-opening door "just for a minute" to change a light bulb. It was knocked over by another worker coming through the door, and both he and the worker on the ladder were injured.”

All of these "accidents waiting to happen" had been ignored because they didn't really seem that dangerous to the workers involved.

Employees all knew about, and carefully avoided, the major hazards in the workplace – not walking under suspended loads, replacing guards and barriers next to openings, etc.

We often intend to report a defective tool, extension cord, or stepladder so that they can be repaired or maintained but don't take the time, carry on using it until it pack's

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up entirely, or forget about it. But it is vitally important to follow through on our good intentions, since these are just the sort of "little things" that might result in a serious injury, not just to me and you, but to other workers, or someone not even involved with the work – passers-by, visitors to site, etc.

Minor injuries left untreated are also "little things" that can cause big trouble if ignored. "Just a scratch" can become infected; a speck of dust in the eye can scratch the cornea and cause severe eye damage if not attended to. So, be sure to report even seemingly minor injuries and get appropriate first aid treatment.

Little things do count! If we take a few minutes to pay attention to all the potential hazards around us we can prevent serious injuries from happening to ourselves and other employees.

REMEMBER TO LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF YOUR WORKMATES!!

DON'T FORGET – IF IT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU, IT'S IMPORTANT TO US SO LET US KNOW BY RAISING A SFETY CONCERN OR NEAR MISS REPORT. YOUR PROMPT INTERVENTION COULD PREVENT AN ACCIDENT!!