

## HAZARD RECOGNITION

I've never met a worker who intentionally injured himself or herself, but I suppose there will always be a first. This should go without saying, but unfortunately, many workers are seriously injured each year and many people still believe that accidents "just happen", and that nothing could be done to prevent them. But of course accidents do not 'just happen'!



### So What Goes Wrong?

Usually, an error that is within the control of one or more people is at the bottom of things. Often, several errors or mistakes take place, at the same time, for an accident to occur. So when we analyze accidents, we should focus on which aspects of a task were properly 'controlled' and those which were not.

Assuming that workers have been properly trained and all the proper materials and tools were available, what else can go wrong? The answer is frequently an awful lot! Accidents are most frequently due to haste, inattention, and poor planning.

"A recent example involved a guy who suffered a serious cut to his leg from a disc cutter, doing what you might think was the relatively simple task of trimming the end of a clay pipe. He stood the pipe on end, but it started to topple over when the weight of the blade was on it. So he took one hand off the disc cutter to try and catch the pipe before it fell and broke, but the disc cutter blade which was still spinning became entangled with the sleeve of the protective overalls that he had tied round his waist. This caused the disc cutter to be drawn across his leg resulting in a nasty cut that required several stitches to put right. Standing the pipe on end to cut it in combination with a failure to ensure that loose clothing was kept out of the way of the spinning blade both helped to cause the accident. If he had laid the pipe down on a flat surface and wedged it to prevent it from moving before cutting it, it probably wouldn't have mattered that he had tied the sleeves of his overalls round his waist – the accident probably wouldn't have happened."

Haste, inattention, poor planning? Or all three – what do you think?

### Don't Take Safety Shortcuts:

When workers get out on the job with a Supervisor monitoring their output, they are expected to achieve production goals. If they feel pressured or that their job is on the line, they may pay less attention to safety than to getting the job done, in order to look good in the eyes of the boss. This can often lead to poor choices being made that put them and their co-workers at risk. Many accidents happen in just this manner. But of course, any incident has a negative impact on production, because dealing with them requires valuable resources to be diverted – both time and money.

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### Plan Ahead!:

An essential part of each employee's responsibility is to work safely, and that means taking time to review what is to be done – and just as importantly what could go wrong. Employees should make it a habit to check out the site and assure themselves that the work can be done without mishaps. It helps to remember the Five Ps:

### Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance

#### Identify Hazards:

The following questions should be asked, to help predict what could go wrong and how risks might be effectively controlled. Remember – we can't eliminate all risk; what is important is that they are managed appropriately:

- Is the site and the job the same as depicted on the job information pack?
- Are the necessary materials available to perform all of the work that needs to be done today?
- Does everyone have the proper tools to perform the tasks in hand?
- Are there enough workers to handle the job? Have they all had safety training?
- Are environmental conditions such as light, noise and weather a factor?
- Are there too many people in the area (is it too congested) to work safely?
- Have other contractors on the job been notified about hazardous tasks or materials being undertaken or used on site?

**Don't wait for accidents to occur! Think and plan ahead!**

**Anticipate, Evaluate and Control Hazards!**

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

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT IF YOU DON'T THINK IT IS SAFE!!**

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