YCPARMIA Safety Journal

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Walk the Safety Walk

There are approximately 100,000 to 200,000 on the job foot injuries every year. Think about what it would be like if you injured one or both of your feet. How would you get around? How would you work? Think about the pain every time you put weight on your foot, or about the possibility that the injury might cause permanent damage and leave you disabled.

Recognizing and avoiding foot hazards will help prevent injuries. Common hazards are:

- ⇒ Heavy falling or dropped objects
- ⇒ Rolling objects or equipment
- ⇒ Puncture wounds from sharp objects
- ⇒ Slips, trips, and falls
- ⇒ Splashes of chemicals or hot substances
- ⇒ Electric shock

You may need to wear safety shoes or some other type of protective footwear. Your supervisor will tell you the exact type of protection you need. Even if you don't need special footwear, wearing comfortable, sturdy shoes with nonslip soles will provide protection and help you avoid an injury. After all, who can afford to be off their feet for long?

Safety & The Bad Old Days

Workplace safety has come a long way in the last 100 years. In 1909, most workers faced dangerous, dirty, and exhausting working conditions. There were poisons in the air and in the materials that workers handled with their bare hands. Workplaces were often very hot or very cold. Machines were noisy, unguarded, and unpredictable.

Children as young as 10 or 11 worked alongside adults. In fact, children were often prized employees because they were cheaper and with their little hands, they could more easily reach into operating machinery to clear jams and make adjustments. Many women and girls ended up in sweat shops sewing clothes under terrible conditions. They often worked 14 or 16 hours a day without breaks, health insurance, or any kind of safety rules. When one was injured and couldn't work, she was out of luck—and out of a job.

When one New York sweatshop packed with 600 women and girls was consumed in 1911 by a raging fire, 146 workers either died from the fire and smoke or jumped to their deaths from the upper floors of the multi-story factory. There were only a few buckets available to put out the fire, and no one had thought about how workers on the upper floors might escape if a fire broke out.

Although we've come a long way from the early 1900's, we can still improve safety conditions and make our workplaces as safe as possible today and in the future.

Safety Training - When, Why & How

Safety training sessions and safety meetings provide you with the skills and information you need to prevent accidents, injuries, illnesses on the job. Generally speaking, you'll receive safety training:

- When you're hired
- When your job duties or assignments change
- When new equipment or materials introduce new hazards to the workplace
- When there are changes in safety policies and procedures, or
- When OSHA regulations change

You'll also receive periodic refresher training to keep your skills and knowledge up to date. You should be retrained whenever there's an incident or near miss that indicates safety problems, or when there's a decline in safety performance from individual employees or a whole group of workers.

The type of training—classroom training, demonstrations, computer-assisted training, and so on—will depend on the subject and the needs of the trainees. Our trainers will do their best to make sure you are well prepared to identify hazards and take proper precautions.

Mastering Machines

Machine accidents are responsible for some of the worst workplace injuries, like amputations. You always want to be alert and take precautions to prevent accidents when operating any machine:

➲ Always wear appropriate PPE, like eye protection. Also wear safety shoes if your job involves handling heavy items.

➲ Wear proper work clothing. No material that could get caught in the machine, such as jewelry, loose sleeves, and long hair.

➲ Make sure all guards are in place and operating correctly.

➲ Never leave a machine running unattended or make manual adjustments while a machine is running.

➲ Use only appropriate tools for removing chips and debris, not your hands.

➲ Report machine problems immediately. Shut down any machine that smokes, shocks, smells like it's burning, or otherwise appears to be malfunctioning. Call in trained and qualified maintenance personnel to make repairs.

Hidden Hazards

Most people don't think about one workplace hazard: Other workers who are not following safety rules. For example, a worker on a ladder tosses a tool down to the ground without looking to see if someone is walking below. The worker on the ladder ignored the common sense safety rule that says you should wear a tool belt so you can keep your tools in the belt when you're done with them.

• **Don't take risks.** Make sure you know the safe way to do a job. If you're not sure, check with your supervisor before you start to work.

• **Talk to co-workers about safety**—yours and theirs. A team is not truly safe if *some* people aren't working safely. Make sure everybody knows and follows all the safety rules.

• **Make safety a priority.** Get involved in safety training and learn how to work safely. Make suggestions for ways to improve safety. Be a safety booster, not a hidden hazard.