

Safety Matters

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A Positive Workplace Safety Attitude and You

One definition of a positive workplace safety attitude refers to an employee's tendency to respond positively towards a safety goal, idea, plan, procedure, prevention or situation. It's a fact that your work attitude not only affects how well you do your job, but also affects how safe you are when you're doing it. Attitude is the spark that drives your behavior.

The ingredients for your safety attitude are:

- Emotions or feelings which are driven by your mental state at any particular time
- Your beliefs or opinions derived from your personal life experiences
- Your inclination (or not!) for action, usually driven by your opinions
- Your positive or negative response to stimuli, giving rise to your actions

If you have a **positive attitude**, you tend to derive a great deal of satisfaction from your life and your work. Positive people seldom give up. They usually perform well in the workplace because they are motivated to maintain an open mind, are receptive to new ideas, pay attention to details and consider the possible outcomes of the ways in which they act. They develop safe work habits because, among other things, they are always looking for ways to improve.

There are many ways to identify those workers with positive attitudes, such as the ability to think first and only then to take action. These people recognize potential hazards before they have had time to cause problems, and then deal appropriately with them. Another clue to a positive attitude is the person being able to focus solely on the task in hand, particularly when machinery and equipment are involved.

These behaviors help to develop work habits that lead to a high degree of efficiency and organization.

Positive workplace safety attitudes are represented by:

- eagerness
- alertness
- attentiveness
- carefulness
- task focused behavior
- team-oriented co-operation
- seriousness

In turn, these attitudes lead to:

- Protection of the state's equipment, property and workforce
- Prevention of all types of accidents and near misses
- Preparation for any emergencies
- Improvement of the work environment
- Maintenance of workforce morale

How can workers individually improve their attitude to safety? Every employee can take positive steps to improve safety attitudes by:

- Taking personal responsibility for their own safety and that of their co-workers.
- Paying attention to training.
- Following every step in every job every time.
- Knowing and following safety rules.
- Using required personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Giving work their full attention.
- Keeping an eye out for hazards and always asking, "What could go wrong here?"
- Putting personal feelings and problems aside while working.
- Urging their co-workers to follow safety procedures.
- Knowing what to do in an emergency.
- Asking questions about any procedure or precaution that's not clear.
- Reporting any safety hazards they can't fix.
- Saving fooling around for their personal time.

Positive workplace safety attitudes are essential for an accident free work environment. They result in high efficiency and quality, while at the same time lowering the cost of accidents, and raising employee morale, business efficiency and goodwill.

So, do you recognize your safety attitude in this article?

WAS IT REALLY CARELESSNESS?

How many times have you thought or read that the cause of someone's accident or injury was the result of carelessness? Carelessness is an overused word in the safety lexicon. In investigating or reporting an accident or near miss, it's often tempting to sum up the major cause as "carelessness." This indicates that the accident probably could have been avoided if someone hadn't done – or failed to do – something. But it doesn't really help in pinpointing the real cause, let alone correcting whatever behavior was involved, in order to prevent recurrence.

When "careless" behavior is at the root cause of the incident, it probably means that the person did not:

- THINK
- Comply with safety regulations
- Follow instructions (written or verbal)
- Use safe work procedures
- Use sound judgment
- Know how to do the work properly
- Pay full attention to the work
- Wear proper personal protective clothing and/or equipment
- Use tools or equipment in a safe manner

So, if your input is ever sought as to the cause of a particular accident, find a better term than "carelessness." You'll probably find it on the above list. Remember, the more exact you can be, the more likely we can avoid a repetition.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

One of the keys to a safe work environment is something called situational awareness.

Suppose you are a jet test pilot. You will be flying jets that may not have been tested or may have only been tested a few times. Danger is present at every moment and the pilots must be acutely aware of their situation from second to second.

But suppose you have done the same job hundreds of times. What is your level of situational awareness now?

Safety professionals encourage workers to train themselves to think as fighter pilots do:

OBSERVE: See changes in conditions, hazards or threats.

ORIENT: Remember and consider what you can do to counter the hazards.

DECIDE: On the best path of prevention or action.

ACT: Take the best path now.

When you think about it, these steps can apply to any situation and any potential hazard. A situation that seems safe could instantly change with any distraction or change in conditions.



"And I'll huff and I'll puff until you give me your Netflix password!"

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

1. What falls but never gets hurt?
2. When do monkeys fall from the sky?
3. Flowers in bloom and rain showers I bring. I live in your mattress and even trampolines. What am I?

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THE IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING EMPLOYEE INCIDENTS OR "NEAR MISSES"

An incident is similar to an accident except that it does not necessarily result in injury or damage. No matter how trivial they are, incidents should be reported to supervision just as accidents are. Employees should be encouraged and periodically reminded about the importance of reporting incidents, or as they are frequently called, near-misses. Consider this article just such a reminder.

Why incidents should be reported

Nothing is learned from unreported incidents. Hazards, causes and contributing circumstances are lost if not reported. Employees who don't take the time to report near-misses they are involved in may not learn from them. The fact that many incidents come within inches of being disabling injury accidents makes failing to report them all the more serious. When incidents are not reported, their causes usually go uncorrected. That means they may happen again, perhaps producing tomorrow's disabling injury or fatality.

What can be learned from an incident?

The whole purpose of reporting and investigating a near-miss incident is to find ways of making sure the same elements that were present on that occasion don't result in an accident at some future time. So here are some of the questions to which answers must be sought:

- What were the circumstances surrounding the near miss? Was there a hazard that the employee should have been aware of?
- Is there a safety rule covering the situation? If so, did the almost-victim know it? If there isn't such a rule, should there be one?
- Were any safety devices, clothing or equipment used improperly or not used at all when they were called for?
- Have there been other near-misses of the same type?

The answers should suggest ways to prevent a recurrence. Perhaps there need to be new rules or procedures developed. Or, maybe more thorough training is required. In any case, the reporting of the incident is the vital first step.

Almost an accident: Be warned

How many times have you come close to having an accident, shrugged it off as a near-miss, and gone on your merry way without giving it another thought? Give it thought. Many times, the difference between a near-miss and an accident is just a fraction of a second in timing or a fraction of an inch in distance. Next time, the difference may not be there.

Near-misses are warnings of accidents in the making. If we accept the warnings and look for the causes, we may be able to prevent similar situations from developing. Let's say you're going up a gangplank onto a bridge footer. Your foot slips, but you're young, agile, fast, and empty-handed. So, you regain your balance with no harm done. The reactions of the next person to come along are a little slower than yours. Then comes the third worker, just as fast as the first two but unable to maneuver because he's carrying a heavy load. He slips and falls off the plank with the load on top of him. How seriously he's injured is a matter of luck – perhaps only scratches, but maybe a broken ankle or rib or neck. Now the loose cleat, sand, mud or ice is discovered, and the condition is corrected. But it's like locking the garage after the motorcycle is stolen. Two people saw the thief but didn't recognize what was happening, so didn't report anything.

There are a few accidents that occur without some advance warning, and that is what a near-miss is. If we heed that warning and check into the hazard, most accidents can be eliminated. So, keep your eyes open for those advance warnings. Don't shrug off the near-misses as only close calls; find out why they happened and who can take corrective action.

Don't take unnecessary chances or ignore warnings, and don't think "it can't happen to me." It can happen to you if you don't take precautions to protect yourself.



SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH DISTRACTED DRIVING

Distracted driving is a major cause of car accidents, especially with the rise of cell phone use and texting. Distracted driving is any visual or auditory activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. Examples of distracted behaviors include:

- Texting
- Using a cell phone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or iPhone
- Smoking

Because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most dangerous for both the driver and all others on the road.

Here are some tips to help you take action against distracted driving.

- Pay attention.
- Avoid distractions like texting, talking on the phone, or playing games while driving.
- Put your phone away when driving.
- Pull over and park in a safe location if a call or text is absolutely necessary.
- Change your voicemail greeting to inform callers you are on the road and will return their call when you can do so safely. Install an app that blocks text messages, phone calls and other alerts when driving, turn on "do not disturb" or airplane mode.
- Discourage others from calling or texting you while you're driving.
- Have passengers manage your phone for you.
- Prepare before you drive. Review maps, adjust your radio, eat, and make any phone calls needed before you drive.
- Request phone-free driving when you are a passenger.
- Model safe driving behavior.
- There are many free apps available to prevent your cellphone from becoming a distraction while you're driving. To find apps to help you or your children drive distraction-free, check with your cellphone provider or visit the app store on your phone and search "distracted driving".

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



"To save time, let's tell each other which parts of our bodies aren't aching."

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS

1. The rain.
2. During "APE" -ril showers!
3. Spring

