SafetyResources

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October - December 2009

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A Message from the CEO

Robert Baldwin

More with Less…

This is a pretty scary phase to hear these days…it usually means your work load is about to increase and a friend is about to lose their job. Unfortunately, this is a truthful as companies scrutinize the value added for every dollar spent to ensure financial stability.

In some ways, more with less is a good thing. Doing more with fewer resources makes us rely on each other in a way we never have before. We lower the internal resistance that makes so many of us isolated and independent and we realize (sometimes with difficulty) that we need each other and that we work best when we work together. We form teams. When our teams fail, we consol ourselves. When we succeed we have others to celebrate with.

Technically, this is how safety works best…that is, we recognize our inter-relationships with others and do our very best to manage hazards for our own protection and for the protection of others who work with us. As consultants and advisors, our job is to create understanding, cooperation and consensus; this is best done when the work group has a sense of inter-relatedness to begin with.

The adversity of national economics has in some ways united us to accomplish better workplace safety.

So, more with less… it isn't all bad.

News and Events

New Employees Announcement

Safety Resources welcomes Ryan Goings and Jennifer Kemp as the newest members of our firm.

Ryan joined the SRI staff in July as a safety consultant. He is a graduate of Indiana State University with a Bachelor of Science in Safety Management. He previously worked for a local safety consultant firm and is an expert in electrical safety.

Jennifer joined SRI as our office consultant. She is a 2004 graduate from Ball State University with a degree in Economics. She previously worked as a bookkeeper and office assistant to a church and retirement village.

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H1N1 Preparedness

By: Kristin VanSoest

As safety consultants, we are able to understand how the H1N1 Virus can spread rapidly, and we assume the responsibility to make you aware of it also. For most of us, not to include the extremely young or extremely old, the unhealthy or pregnant, this virus is most often less severe than the typical seasonal flu. The biggest problem we face is the rapidly spreading germs and the extreme contagiousness of the virus. I would compare the transmission of germs to a simple statement: If I am infected with the virus and I sneeze into my hands and open a door using the knob, the next person who opens that same door after me is very likely to become infected.

The main reasoning for the "hype" has nothing to do with the severity…it simply has to do with the transmission. So, to protect ourselves, our coworkers, our homes, etc., we must follow some very simple rules:

- Handwashing, handwashing, handwashing.
- Use tissues when you sneeze or cough, or do so into the sleeve of your shirt.
- Hand sanitizer should be used when on-the-go.
- Warning system. If you are infected, warn others or stay away.
- Get the vaccination.
- Disposable surgical masks if you feel comfortable and feel you need one. Please keep in mind that if you are an employee and you were a mask such as this, it still falls under OSHA's Respiratory Program and you must be trained and fit tested.

"The main reasoning for the "hype" has nothing to do with the severity"

So, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) stated this could be the worst flu season we've ever seen. Possible? Absolutely. Severe? Probably not on a case by case basis, but controlling the spread is the first step and we can all do our part.

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The Site Specific Toolbox Talk

By: Chris Hall

One of the responsibilities that OSHA places on both employers and employees is the requirement to exercise due diligence in identifying hazards in the work being conducted. In many cases, employees see multiple hazards every day and fail to report these to their supervisors. After many accidents, employees interviewed commonly say that they knew the hazard existed, but it was not reported or no action was ever taken. It is best practice to ask employees to be able to identify hazards, report them, and in some instances, help to develop appropriate control measures to protect themselves.

A common tool to document risk identification is the Job Hazard Analysis (JHA). This document is commonly filled out daily or weekly by a supervisor or safety leader who is knowledgeable in the work being conducted and is able to identify the hazards. However, it is the front line employees who are best able to recognize new hazards and fine tune the details of current safety procedures. Many companies utilize safety or toolbox talks to convey recognized hazards, but few companies ask employees to input information into these talks.

> "it is the front line employees who are best able to recognize new hazards"

By merging the JHA and toolbox talk, employers can create a regular meeting where employees input their own experiences on a particular jobsite and determine the best way to eliminate the hazard, or at least limit exposure to workers. This information sharing and documentation, when used in multi-employer construction worksites, may also prove to be valuable in the instance of an OSHA inspection. In many cases, the employer with exposed employees may know of the hazards, but will not have direct control to correct or abate them. Since the exposed employees are the most at risk of injury, OSHA requires that employers report the hazard to the controlling contractor and educate their employees where necessary. In extreme circumstances, OSHA requires that employers remove exposed employees from the work area, if no adequate control measures can be implemented. The site specific toolbox talk is an excellent tool to accomplish the tasks of hazard identification and employee education at the same time.

Below is a basic format, using a simple three step question and answer process that employees can complete together during their daily or weekly safety meeting.

This toolbox talk will provide an open-forum to discuss the hazards of the job jobsite. During your work day, it is important to remember these three steps to hazard analysis:

What is the hazard? **How can it hurt me?** **What can I do to protect myself?**

The first task is to have everyone list hazards or potentially hazardous conditions on the job site:

Item 1._____
Item 2._____
Item 3._____
Item 4._____

Next, list the worst case scenario of what could happen to someone who is injured due to each condition.

Item 1._____
Item 2._____
Item 3._____
Item 4._____

Finally, describe what you are doing or could do to protect your selves and coworkers from these hazards

Item 1._____
Item 2._____
Item 3._____
Item 4._____

Now that we have discussed these hazards it is important that we follow through on our ideas to correct or avoid these hazards.

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Why Do Accidents Happen?

By: Matt McCreery

Accidents occur for many reasons. Often people tend to look for excuses or to place blame on their environment and equipment after an incident has occurred. While these things can surely cause an accident, in most cases human error is to blame. Consider the underlying accident causes described. Have you been guilty of any of these attitudes or behaviors?

"It is better to be careful 100 times than to get killed once." (Mark Twain)

- Taking Shortcuts: Every day we make decisions we hope will make the job faster and more efficient. But do time savers ever risk your own safety, or that of other crew members? Short cuts that reduce your safety on the job are not shortcuts, but an increased chance for injury.
- Being Over Confident: Confidence is a good thing. Overconfidence is *too much* of a good thing. "It'll never happen to me" is an attitude that can lead to improper procedures, tools, or methods in your work. Any of these can lead to an injury.
- Starting a Task with Incomplete Instructions: To do the job safely and right the first time you need complete information. Have you ever seen a worker sent to do a job, having been given only a part of the job's instructions? Don't be shy about asking for explanations about work procedures and safety precautions. It isn't dumb to ask questions; it's dumb not to.
- Poor Housekeeping: When clients, managers or safety professionals walk through your work site, housekeeping is an accurate indicator of everyone's attitude about quality, production and safety. Poor housekeeping creates hazards of all types. A well maintained area sets a standard for others to follow. Good housekeeping involves both pride and safety.
- Ignoring Safety Procedures: Purposely failing to observe safety procedures can endanger you and your co-workers. You are being paid to follow the company safety policies-not to make your own rules. Being "casual" about safety can lead to a casualty!
- Mental Distractions from Work: Having a bad day at home and worrying about it at work is a hazardous combination. Dropping your 'mental' guard can pull your focus away from safe work procedures. You can also be distracted when you're busy working and a friend comes by to talk while you are trying to work. Don't become a statistic because you took your eyes off the machine "just for a minute."
- Failure to Pre-Plan the Work: There is a lot of talk today about Job Hazard Analysis. JHA's are an effective way to figure out the smartest ways to work safely and effectively. Being hasty in starting a task, or not thinking through the process can put you in harms way. Instead, Plan Your Work and then Work Your Plan!

"JHA's are an effective way to figure out the smartest ways to work safely"

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The Use and Safety of Suspended Personnel Platforms

By: Ryan J. Goings

The use of suspended personnel platforms hoisted by cranes or derricks is one of the most highly regulated construction activities. By OSHA's own rules, it is technically illegal, unless it can be determined that all other conventional means are not feasible. The practice is risky, but can be made safe, by following the guidelines.

Personnel Platforms and Crane Safety

- The crane operator shall determine that all systems, controls, and safety devices are activated and functioning properly and that all configurations necessary to reach those work areas remain under the 50 percent limit of the hoists rated capacity.
- A trail lift of the personnel platforms, unoccupied, with a minimum weight of the anticipated load shall be conducted immediately prior to placing personnel in the platform. These test runs shall be repeated one at a time to every location that employee/s will be working.
- Platform must not be loaded in excess of the rated load capacity. Important information is posted on the Data Plates, located on the bottom side of the upper guardrail of the personnel platforms. The Data Plate must contain the personnel platforms serial number, gross weight, test weight, maximum occupancy and its MAXIMUM RATED LOAD CAPACITY.
- A thorough knowledge of the operating characteristics and limitations of the personnel platform is the first requirement for any user, regardless of his or her prior experience with similar types of equipment. Allow only authorized and qualified personnel who have demonstrated that they understand the proper procedures and use of the personnel platform, to use it. Always inspect the personnel platform before each use for deficiencies, damage, and/or broken welds.
- Personnel platforms shall be used only for employees, their tools, and materials necessary to do their work, and shall not be used to hoist only materials or tools when not hoisting personnel, all employees must use personnel fall arrest system (PFAS).

For complete safety guidelines, 29 CFR 1926.550 (g) shall be followed prior to use of any Suspended Personnel Platform work.

> "By OSHA's own rules, it is technically illegal, unless it can be determined that all other conventional means are not feasible."