



SafetyResOources

SAVING LIVES. SAVING COMPANIES.
800.641.5990

July - September 2011

A Message from the President Kristin VanSoest

Safety Resources, Inc. – Making our drive and expertise work for you...

Over the past 16 years, I am extremely proud of what we have achieved, and even more excited about our outlook for the future. We have successfully evolved into a respected firm, while earning our clients' trust along the way.

When conveying Safety Resources successes, I always return back to three guiding principles—each of which has helped define who we are today:

Talented People. One of our most important assets is the extensive knowledge base, deep-rooted professionalism and unwavering commitment of our highly-qualified, diverse staff. They are at the core of who we are and what we do.

Honest Perspective. As we continue to grow, each new day offers a chance for us to work together, pursue new opportunities and improve upon the past. We establish in-depth relationships with our clients by learning their environments, challenges and goals firsthand, so that we can offer tangible solutions with a candid perspective. We continue to manage our business around the evolving needs of our clients, so that we can be at the forefront of change and deliver value.

Quality Work Product. We take pride in the quality of work we provide to our customers, and they continue to be loyal business partners because of this. It's an incredible feeling to see the affect we have made on the community and our clients' businesses when we work hard to give them what they're really wanting, and in the most efficient way possible.

Present and Future...

Currently, we are a certified WBE (Woman-owned Business Enterprise) with the City of Indianapolis as well as the State of Indiana. We are awaiting our official certification number from INDOT for DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise), as well as the official certification for 8(a) and WBENC (Woman-owned Business Enterprise National Council), (all of which are pending). We are proud to offer these diversity advantages to our customers, and we plan to continue in our quest to serve clients more effectively and efficiently by staying on top of local and national requirements, as well as keep a leading edge understanding in the ever-evolving industry of safety. Our consultants are consistently attending professional development seminars, and we are investing in our consultants to enable them to be more of a resource to you, our customer. We hope to always stay a step ahead of industry changes for the benefit of our customers and business partners.

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News and Events

WBE State of Indiana Certified

As of April 21, 2011, Safety Resources, Inc. has been certified as a Women's Business Enterprise with the State of Indiana in the following categories: Environmental Safety Services, Safety or Risk Analysis, Safety Training Services, and Occupational Health or Safety Services.

This certification is valid until April 30, 2014.

New Employee Announcement

SRI would like to welcome Shawn Shivers II to the team. Shawn joined us in May and is a graduate of Indiana University. We are excited to have Shawn as part of the team.

2nd Annual Day at the Track

SRI held its second annual day at the track on Thursday, May 19, 2011 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend, we hope to see you again next year.



Employer Affirmative Defense

By: Matt McCreery

As important as the Informal Conference can be for employers dealing with OSHA citations, setting your company up with affirmative defense documentation can be just as helpful or more. While the OSHA informal conference is a good place to state your case, with a little pre-planning and proper documentation often you can get a citation removed entirely. The following legally-recognized defenses should be considered when conducting training and pre-planning for specific jobs.

“As important as the Informal Conference can be for employers dealing with OSHA citations, setting your company up with affirmative defense documentation can be just as helpful or more.”

- Employees Misconduct
 - The violation charged resulted exclusively from the employee’s conduct.
 - The violation was not participated in, observed by, or performed with the knowledge and/or consent of any supervisory personnel
 - That the employees conduct went against a well established company policy or work rule which was in effect at the time of citation.
 - Policies & Programs
 - Documented training on work rules, policies, and programs
 - Enforcement of work rules and policies
 - Site inspections
 - Previous disciplinary action
- The impossibility of compliance defense
 - Compliance with the standard was functionally impossible or would preclude performance of required work.
 - Alternative means of employee protection are unavailable or in use.
 - Site Specific Safety Plan’s outlining alternative measures are recommended.
- Greater hazard in compliance
 - The hazards of compliance are greater than the hazards of non-compliance.
 - Alternative means of protecting employees are unavailable.
 - A variance application would be inappropriate.
- Cited equipment not in use
 - Examples of vacated citations
 - Ladder with a broken side rail that had been taken out of service
 - Inoperable tool in the process of being repaired
- No hazard
 - OSHA must prove that the violation is a direct and immediate danger to personnel.
 - If OSHA cannot prove that a hazard exists it is likely the citation can be vacated.

The items above are just a snapshot of affirmative employer defenses against OSHA citations. The realm of OSHA citations can be challenging and frustrating if you are not prepared or if you’re lacking certain documentation. If you need help with any of these items or other safety related issue please feel free to call Safety Resources Inc. at 1-800-641-5990.

OSHA Inspection Procedure

By: Jeff Groce

In the first two installments we looked at the different types of inspections that OSHA can conduct and the Opening Conference of an OSHA inspection. In this installment, we will take a brief look at the actual inspection process. While this is the hands on site walk, there are some things to be aware of.

Company Representative. Have a company representative from the site available or designated, to walk the site with the compliance officer. This company representative should have the authority to correct issues and direct employees, so that things can be corrected while the compliance officer is on site.

Have a camera on site. The compliance officer will have one. Have the designated company representative take the camera on the walk-through and take a picture of everything the compliance officer takes a picture of. The company representative should feel free to ask the compliance officer to wait while he takes a picture as well.

Note pad. The company representative should have a note pad and pencil so that they can write down the issues that the compliance officer notes. The compliance officer will take note, especially concerning the specifics about a violation. Do not be afraid to ask the compliance officer what the violation is, if it is not obvious. Example: if it is a violation involving a power tool, the compliance officer will note the make, model, serial number, model number, color and what is wrong with the tool.

During the site inspection, the compliance officer will walk the jobsite to inspect the site from top to bottom. The compliance officer will take photographs of issues and violations and the company representative should take the same picture. The company rep should then, do everything possible to have the violation corrected right then. It will show the compliance officer that the company is serious when it comes to safety, and it will enable the compliance officer to see that the violation was corrected and he can write on the citation that it was corrected on site.

While on the walkthrough, the compliance officer will ask to interview employees. The company representative can help facilitate this process. Although the company representative may not be present during the interview process, the company representative can help calm the employees if they have problems in talking with the compliance officers. Sometimes employees think they are in trouble or will be in trouble if they talk to the compliance officers. The company representative, if needed, can tell the employees that it is ok to talk to the compliance officer and answer his questions.

When the compliance officer finds a violation, the company representative may be trying to figure out how to correct the issue, feel free to ask the compliance officer. While the compliance officer cannot tell you how to correct an issue, he may say things like: "in the past", "I have seen it done this way". The compliance officer is not allowed to tell a company how to fix an issue, but they can tell you what they have seen in the past on other jobs and with other companies that might be able to be applied to this site.

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National Safety Month

By: Chris Hall

June is a month highly celebrated in the safety industry as “National Safety Month.” Every year safety professionals gear up to get the word out on safety at home and at work and try to bring their ideas to the willing as a way to reduce injuries through education. This week (June 5-11) is focused on prevention of injuries resulting from overexertion.

Overexertion is caused by putting too great of stress on one’s body by pushing the physical limits of what can be handled. Overexertion is grouped into two types of injuries; Strains and Sprains. Most commonly, these injuries are associated as back strains, but can cause a number of soft tissue injuries affecting any area of the body. The difficulty of dealing with such an injury is the ease of reoccurrence and the lengthy time it takes to rehabilitate. Preventing them is a challenge, especially in the construction industry where most everyone is expected to do physically challenging work.

“Overexertion is caused by putting too great of stress on one’s body by pushing the physical limits of what can be handled.”

The first step to prevention is education on proper lifting techniques. The methodology for proper lifting has been common knowledge for most, but followed by just a few; Keep the load close to the body, lift with the legs (not the back), and be careful not to twist or bend the back while carrying a load. Identifying poor technique is easy, but monitoring each worker, every minute of every day is not. It is up to each individual to make the right choice, but it is up to management to ensure they are educated and knowledgeable of what the right choices are. Getting buy-in and acceptance from workers is crucial here. The simplest method is to put the consequences on the injury squarely on the shoulders of the work, by stressing the long term effects of a serious overexertion injury. Usually, this means a lifetime of reoccurring injuries and inability to perform not only work, but recreational activities as well.

The next step is to teach workers to be knowledgeable about their own capabilities. Not everyone is able to lift the same weights. Finding a set limit on what is or is not acceptable may prove difficult, especially since there are high degrees of variation between individuals. I prefer what we refer to as the “airport rule.” This is in reference to the regulations by most airlines on checked baggage. When traveling, bags are checked and weighed. If the bag is under 50 lbs, a standard baggage fee applies. If it ranges from 50-75 lbs, an overweight fee applies. If the bag is over 75 lbs, it is usually shipped as cargo, with a completely different rate. This rule is in effect to prevent baggage handlers from lifting more than 50 lbs repeated, up to 75 lbs on occasion, and never anything over. It is an excellent policy to put into place for any company.

In conclusion what we will discuss is prevention through good management. It is recommended that supervisors understand basic guidelines for preventing overexertion and follow up by making changes where they are needed. For instance if employees are required to move large or heavy loads, how could they be broken down into smaller loads or could they be moved using different methods. In many cases, a crew may not have the equipment needed to make this possible, so supervisors need to use some foresight in determining what workers will need to make their jobs easier. Any field employee will tell you that they will perform their job and tasks regardless if they have the right tools and equipment. This is especially true with lifting and overexertion situations. If a worker doesn’t have a cart or wheelbarrow, they will move the material by any means necessary. It is a supervisor’s job to prevent this from happening and a workers responsibility to communicate the needs up the chain of command.

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Authentic Participation is KEY

By: Ryan Clayton

In Kenneth Miller's book titled Objective Based Safety Training, he discusses barriers to adult participation and learning. Trainer competence is the most significant barrier Miller discusses and many of us can relate to it. For instance we are put in front of the barrier every time we conduct a tool box talk. Miller defines Trainer competence as not only an expert in the subject matter, but also "competence in how the interaction with the class is managed". (Miller pg.74) Coming from a college career of presenting information to the class and professor, authentic interaction with the audience was not really observed and evaluated. However if you go back and think about the best class you ever had, I bet that the instructor shared similar characteristics which include: enthusiasm, empathetic, and subject matter expert. It is these types of instructors that have an understanding on how to bring conversation out of a class and in turn create authentic participation.

There are many ways to get over this barrier but the ones that I have found to work the best are as follows. First we must create the right environment for the audience. For instance create an environment that is not the same as ones work environment. Tool box talks should not be done on the job site itself rather in another area nearby. This allows the audience to apply their full attention to the training that is given. However the physical location is not always something that can be changed, for that reason it is important to designate a rally point to meet for emergencies and use that point to conduct a tool box talk.

Also to be a competent trainer one would have to master the art of "selling" of the material. With enthusiasm and confidence the interaction of the audience is gained and trust is built. If your audience is not buying what you say then the training is useless. Ask questions, and tell stories that can relate to the topic at hand. Confidence is very important, and comes from the trainer understanding the material and also understanding the audiences need for the training. With confidence comes enthusiasm!

By applying these ideas to all trainings/tool box talks, we can guarantee retention of the material and in turn...a safer work place.

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Safety Incentive Programs

By: Shawn Shivers II

“This article will discuss tips on how to make your safety incentive program a successful one and shed light on why your program could be one that fails.”

Can workplace safety incentive programs do more harm than good? Or is the better question, are your workplace safety incentive programs causing more harm than good? Do you think an organization should have cash based bonus programs or take the traditional approach? Can one proclaim that incentive programs should be based on industry? These are not meant to be rhetorical questions, and do require some thought before answering. This article will discuss tips on how to make your safety incentive program a successful one and shed light on why your program could be one that fails.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, “OSHA neither approves nor disapproves the design or the effectiveness of safety incentive programs. However, we do not look favorably on safety incentive programs which encourage under reporting of workplace injury (OSHA, March 2000).” With that said, there are numerous ways in which you can base your safety incentive program. Whether or not your program will sink or swim lies in the details. An organization has many options when it comes to their safety menu. Let’s ponder some appetizers for success.

First, you should never take the cookie cutter approach when implementing your safety incentive program. Always structure your incentive program with the same diligence as other program components. Next, make incentives part of a strong overall safety program supported by management. Management backing illustrates their buy-in and support of company safety. Lastly, give your employees ownership. This is as simple as setting realistic goals that can be measured and are acceptable to both management and workers. Abiding by each of these steps will ensure success in your safety incentive program; however, I must offer you some distasteful menu items that can fail your program.

Furthermore, putting into action a program that does not obligate any change in existing processes or procedures can hinder employee attitudes towards safety. To those outside of management this might be viewed as having another program to meet quota or leave paper trails. Therefore, programs that use incentives to deflect away from real issues will always fail. Don’t reward the wrong type of behavior by not weeding out the “bad actors”. This is the last thing you want your program to consist of. After all, the purpose is to encourage good behavior in the long run by rewarding it in the present. Finally, evade safety incentive programs premised on assumptions related to the first problem – unsafe acts. If you consider your safety incentive program anything like those that fail, on no account will you ever fix your safety issues.

All in all, a company’s safety menu has an assortment of items that may well be included. What makes the list is all up to you. Just keep in mind that your program should be strong and well planned. Taking the cookie cutter approach can lead to an increased incident rate. No matter the industry give your employees ownership, as this creates a supportive work atmosphere. Remember, when implementing your workplace safety incentive program simply stop and consider...is it going to do more harm than good?

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If The Shoe Doesn't Fit By: Aaron Wissen

When was the last time you went out and played a round of golf wearing a pair of hockey skates or sandals? Even if you've never played a round of golf in your life, you know that getting the right equipment before you tee off is necessary if you hope to have any chance of being successful. Likewise, having the right systems, tools and equipment in place should be an employee's first step towards success.

Unfortunately, on today's jobsites, employees do not always use the appropriate tools for the job, and thereby create a potentially dangerous situation for not only themselves, but for everyone involved. Choosing the right tool for any job is critical for the safety of the employees, their co-workers, and their overall goal. As safety professionals we must focus on the systems, tools and equipment being used for the job and discuss the suitability of each with the employees involved in order to safely complete the task.

Key questions to consider:

1. Are the tools and equipment being used appropriate for the task?
2. What condition are the tools and equipment in?
3. Is there a procedure for the job, and if so does it specify what tools are to be used?
4. Was the use of tools and equipment identified as a hazard in the job hazard analysis completed before the job started?

If the systems, tools and equipment being used are the right ones for the job, we should reinforce this safe practice on the jobsite. However, if the systems, tools and equipment being used seem unsuitable for the job, do not fit the purpose, or are creating hazards that could be reduced by using the right gear, then we must immediately stop work and have a discussion. Focus on discovering the reason why the inappropriate system or tool was in place and discuss how to prevent this in the future. Was it not recognized as a hazard or approved by a procedure? Was it recognized but not available on site? Was the tool available but the employee did not go to get it? Each of these reasons requires a different type of approach to addressing a solution, either organizational or behavioral.

While you may not be a scratch golfer, you make choices, like purchasing a nice pair of golf shoes, to help yourself be successful. Shouldn't you do the same on the jobsite?

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OSHA Inspection Procedure

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The compliance officer will inspect the entire site and gang boxes. Employee's tools being used on site will be inspected as well and if there are violations with those tools, those violations go against the company. Tools locked in personal vehicles should not be inspected.

If the site is a multi-employer site, the compliance officer will inspect one company completely then start with another company, then move to a third, as so on until each contractor has been inspected. The only way that all companies will not be inspected is if the inspection resulted from a complaint or an emphasis program. Those may be expanded, if the compliance officer sees a serious violation while conducting the inspection for the reason they are on site.

After the compliance officer finishes his inspection, he will get ready for the closing conference. Next newsletter we will go in-depth with the closing conference.

National Safety Month

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Overexertion injuries can be devastating to both companies and workers. Easy steps to prevention include educating employees, setting good policies, and making sure supervisors are involved in the process. Creating an environment of acceptance can best be done by relating the reasoning and consequences in clear, real-world terms. Any injury can result in a lifetime of pain and inability to enjoy the latter years of one's life. It's imperative that good management practices be used to avoid this pain.