

General Safe Work Practices

Regardless of your job, there are some basic safe work practices that should be observed by everyone working on the job site. The objective of the safety program is to prevent injuries and to allow you to do your job efficiently and safely. It takes an effort on your part to support the safety program but, after all, that's what it's all about.

Right now, let's review some basic safe work practices. All persons must follow these safe practices and render every possible aid to safe operations and be a part of the program by reporting all unsafe conditions or practices to your supervisor or superintendent. The vast majority of work related injuries are the result of unsafe acts of workers. That means, when you take shortcuts, you violate safety regulations or simply don't take safety seriously, injuries are more likely to occur. Your company has a responsibility and obligation to make sure that all employees observe and obey all applicable company, state or Federal regulations and order as is necessary to the safe conduct of the work and must take such action as necessary to obtain compliance.

If you violate company safety rules, or you work in an unsafe manner, you will be provided a written safety counseling. This counseling will explain what the unsafe behavior was and how to correct it. If it's a minor violation, then the counseling will serve as a reminder for the proper procedure. If it's a serious violation, or you continue to exhibit unsafe behavior, disciplinary action may be warranted. The purpose of safety rule enforcement is the protection of all employees. One employee's unsafe behavior can affect the safety of other employees and safety is too important to allow unsafe behavior or unsafe conditions.

In the construction industry, frequent accident prevention instructions or training is provided at least every ten days. However, it is each employee's responsibility to work and act safely every day on every job. Training is simply making you more aware of safety and safety rules and it's your job to work safe and act safely every day.

Anyone known to be under the influence of drugs or intoxicating substances which impair the employee's ability to safely perform the assigned duties shall not be allowed on the job while in that condition. If you are taking medication prescribed by a physician or taking over-the-counter medication, be sure to tell your supervisor before you begin work. Some medications may impair your ability to work or operate equipment safely. We discussed unsafe behavior and how it leads to injuries on the job. Unsafe behavior includes horseplay. Scuffling, practical jokes and other acts which tend to have an adverse influence on the safety or well being of other employees. No one shall knowingly be permitted or required to work while the employee's ability or alertness is so impaired by fatigue, illness, or other causes that they might unnecessarily expose the employee or others to injury.

Work shall be planned and supervised to prevent injuries in the handling of materials and in working together with equipment. Employees shall not enter manholes, underground vaults, chambers, tanks, silos, or other similar places that receive little ventilation unless it has been determined that it is safe to enter. Confined spaces can be quite hazardous from toxic fumes, gas, and other hazards can gather in the spaces creating a dangerous hazard.

Machine guards and other protective devices must be in their proper place before machinery and equipment is used and employees must report any deficiencies or hazards to the supervisor when they are detected. If the equipment is unsafe to operate, do not operate the equipment until it has been replaced or repaired.

Crowding or pushing when boarding or leaving any vehicle or other conveyance is prohibited.

Employees must not handle or tamper with any electrical equipment, machinery, or air or water lines in a manner not within the scope of their duties unless they have received instructions and authorization from their supervisor.

If you are injured on the job, report the injury immediately. Don't wait. Report the injury when it occurs, even if you believe that medical treatment is not necessary. If medical treatment is required, it will be provided.

When lifting any thing, use the power of your legs and not your back. If you keep your back in its natural curvature by bending your legs, it's difficult to suffer a back injury.

Inappropriate footwear or shoes with thin or badly worn soles must not be worn. Wear proper footwear and clothing on the job. Materials, tools, and other objects shall not be thrown from structures until proper precautions are taken to protect others from the falling objects.

Housekeeping is important to everyone's safety so take time to keep your work area clean. If you see a hazard, correct it. If you can't correct the hazard yourself, report it so it can be corrected.

When handling chemicals or hazardous substances be sure to use personal protective equipment as necessary and follow the instructions provided on the chemical label. Never use gasoline for any type of cleaning purposes. Wash your hands and skin after handling chemicals and hazardous materials.

When using ladders, inspect the ladder before using it to make sure it is in good condition and will carry the load. Using the proper ladder on the job is equally important. Never stand on the top two steps of a ladder, and when using straight ladders, make sure the ladder extends at least 3 feet above the landing, or where the ladder is positioned on the structure.

Any damage to scaffolds, false work, or other supporting structures shall be immediately reported to your supervisor and repaired before use.

No source of ignition shall be applied to any enclosed tank or vessel, even if there are some openings, until it has been first determined that no possibility of explosion exists. An authority for the work is obtained from your supervisor. Persons using welding equipment must always be concerned in starting fires from the sparks or flash. Never weld around combustible or flammable material and, if necessary, have someone standing by with a fire extinguisher during welding operations.

When using tools and equipment, maintain these tools and equipment in good serviceable condition. Damaged tools or equipment must be removed from service and tagged "defective." Pipe or Stilson wrenches must not be used as substitute for other wrenches. Only appropriate tools shall be used for a specific job.

Vises must be equipped with handles and not used to punch or pry. A screwdriver should not be used as a chisel. Portable electric tools shall not be lifted or loaded by means of a power cord. Use ropes, not the power cord for lifting or lowering electrical tools. Before electrical tools are used, they must be inspected to make sure the power cord and plugs are in good condition. Cords with cuts or fray must be replaced. You cannot simply wrap electrical tape over a cut or frayed cord.

Only those persons who are trained and authorized may operate machinery or equipment. Loose or frayed clothing, long hair, dangling ties, finger rings, necklaces, and other potentially hazardous items may not be worn around moving machinery or other areas where they become entangled. Machinery shall not be serviced, repaired or adjusted while in operation, or shall oiling of moving parts be attempted, except when equipment that is designed or fitted with safeguards to protect the person performing the work. Where appropriate, lockout-tagout procedures must be used. If you see a piece of equipment or a machine that is locked out and tagged out, do not attempt to operate this equipment. A lock and tag means that someone is working on that machine and could possibly be injured if the equipment were to be inadvertently started.

Employees shall not work under vehicles or other equipment supported by jacks or chain hoists without protective blocking that will prevent injury if jacks or hoists should fail.

Air hoses shall not be disconnected at compressors until the hose line has been bled and is free of any air pressure.

All excavations must be visually inspected before backfilling to ensure it is safe to backfill. Excavating equipment must not be operated near tops of cuts, banks or cliffs if employees are working below. Tractors, bulldozers, scrapers, and carryalls must not operate where there is a possibility of overturning in dangerous areas, like edges of deep fills, cut banks and steep slopes.

Watch out for moving vehicles and equipment on the job site. Often this equipment is noisy and the operator may not be able to hear or see you. You have the responsibility for watch out for moving equipment.

There are many more safe practices and rules that could be listed, but it's impossible to list them all. Actually, safety is simply using common sense and good judgment. If something appears to have the potential for injury, then that's the time to take steps to make sure the injury doesn't occur.

Teamwork - everyone's cooperation and a special effort can result in a safe and helpful work environment. If you take safety seriously, you'll have a much better attitude about yourself and your job. Take time for safety, because safety really does make a difference.