

Safety Attitudes

Most of us have had some type of safety training during childhood. We were taught to look both ways before crossing streets, and not to play with matches. As adults, we were warned by others and by the media not to smoke in bed, not to stay out in the sun too long, and not to drive while under the influence of alcohol. As yet, common as these safety rules may be, how many of us can truthfully say that we have not turned a light on with wet hands, smoked in bed, got a sunburn or driven home from a party after having too many drinks.

Employees often neglect safety rules because they: (1) are in a hurry, (2) figure accidents always happen to others, or (3) are resentful of their supervisors. Every time employees engage in unsafe acts, they are betting that an accident will not occur. Is health, safety, or even life itself, really worth such a gamble?

When employees are aware of safety rules and break them anyway, we say they have unsafe attitudes. The following are examples of unsafe attitudes: A technician neglects to wear eye protection while working with harmful liquids that could splash in the eye: A worker who knows that an object weighs too much to be lifted by one person attempts to lift it without asking for any help.

Safety officers can give excellent safety orientations. You may know all the safety rules and be able to demonstrate the safe way to do your job. But knowing every safety rule ever written will not protect you if you fail to use that knowledge every day on the job. If you have a habit of doing things the wrong way, the habit may be difficult to break, but it can be done. The next time you are about to break a safety rule, stop and think about what could happen to you, your co-workers, or your family. Imagine the pain, the inconvenience, and the lost time and money that could result. Always do the job correctly, the safe way. At first it may seem slower, but soon you will start to notice safety becoming a habit. Safety will turn out to be one of the best habits you ever have. It will decrease your chances of joining those who are disabled or killed in accidents each year.

Let's review a few basic safety rules: (1) Use good body mechanics when lifting and moving objects, get help when you need it, and let your legs rather than your back do most of the work. (2) Practice good housekeeping to avoid slips and falls. Clean up spills and keep all areas free of clutter. (3) Do not use defective electrical equipment; have it repaired. Do not touch outlets, switches, or electrical equipment with wet hands. (4) Take the time to teach safety to your co-workers, especially if you see them violating safety rules.

No one can say when an unsafe condition or act will result in an accident, or when an accident will result in an injury, or when an injury will cause permanent disability or even death. So don't take chances with your life or health; let's resolve to work safely.

