

The Individual's Responsibility

Are you aware of the fact that only about 10 percent of the injuries that occur on any construction job are caused by defective equipment or other factors? Most are caused by people—generally the very ones who were injured. Obviously, therefore, each individual must be primarily responsible for his or her own safety.

Although it is certainly a fact that without proper interest and effort on the part of management and supervision, a safety program cannot be totally effective, workers must realize that they, more than anyone else, must be responsible for their own safety and the safety of their co-workers. In other words, workers must be their brothers' and sisters' keepers.

For example, a simple construction ladder can be built to the best-known safety specifications. It can be properly stored and frequently inspected for defects. However, it is an individual worker that will use it. If the ladder is not properly placed, or not properly tied-off, or the footing is insecure, it is entirely likely that some worker injury will occur.

Often, workers seem to have the feeling that the Safety Coordinator is responsible for accident prevention and therefore, is responsible when accidents do happen. But this is a cop-out. Yes, our Safety Coordinators, do make frequent inspections, and provides safety advice and reminders to workers. But without superhuman powers, no single person can be everywhere on the campus at the same time—or be able to read the mind of a worker who is about to ignore a safe work practice, and do something foolish, careless, or downright dangerous.

Instead, each of us must constantly be alert to the hazards around us. If we cannot personally remove a hazard, it should be called to the attention of those in authority that can correct the hazard.

If any of you have additional thoughts on this subject, let's have them. Remember, it takes 100 percent cooperation from all of us to make the workplace safer for all of us. We do need to be our brothers' and sisters' keeper—and rely on them to help guard OUR safety.