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CLOSE CALLS - TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT NEAR MISSES

A “close call” or accident without injury – often called a Near Miss - is easy to shrug off and forget. But, there is a danger in brushing off accidents that don’t hurt, harm or damage. When a “close call” happens, it should immediately send up a red warning flag that something was wrong, unplanned, unexpected, and could happen again. The next time it happens, it could result in serious damage, injury or death.

For every accident there are usually several contributing factors, most of which can be controlled. The best way to prevent the reoccurrence of an accident is by looking at those “close calls.” By investigating the root causes of an accident, steps can be taken to eliminate the hazard and improve the work system.

Sometimes there are multiple causes for an accident involving: equipment (unguarded machinery), environment (poor lighting or noise level), people (procedures not understood or not followed) or management (allowed shortcuts). Don’t rush to judge. Examine the facts and find what’s missing. Look for immediate and underlying causes. An immediate cause may be an unsafe condition like a mechanical failure or it could be an unsafe action by an employee.

All incidents should be reported to the supervisor so that accident/injury report forms can be completed. Once an investigation is completed, solutions should be sought to prevent the accident from occurring again.

All employees should daily inspect the work area for unsafe conditions or unsafe actions and, if found, report them to the supervisor. Hazard awareness is key to preventing accidents before they happen. Take steps to eliminate hazards as soon as they are discovered. Near misses can happen again and again until they cause injury, so tell your supervisor about every accident, no matter how minor it may seem at the time. You never know when an incident may be repeated and result in an injury or even death.

FOOT SAFETY – IT’S A SHOE-IN FOR SAFETY

To avoid possible injury, it’s important to think about safeguarding the foot before undertaking any job.

Employees may be exposed to various hazardous conditions on the job, including slippery surfaces, climbing hazards, handling or working around heavy equipment and machinery and working around electricity. These different working conditions may require different safety footwear to protect the foot from injury.

When choosing safety footwear, you must select the legally approved shoe or boot required for the job activity, equipment, and situation. Some situations may require steel-toed shoes to provide extra protection over the top of the foot

Safety shoes or boots with impact protection should be worn when workers carry or handle materials such as heavy packages, objects, parts or tools and for other activities where objects may fall onto the foot.

All workers need to evaluate the type and style of shoes that are worn. Shoes should have:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Good Support | Good Traction |
| Good Condition | Fit the Task |
| Fit the Weather | Fit the Person |

EMERGENCY EYEWASH STATIONS

If you have an accident at work that involves your eyes, an emergency eyewash station can protect you from serious eye damage or the loss of your sight. When you work with corrosive, irritating, toxic, or tissue-damaging materials in the workplace, it is important to have an emergency eyewash station immediately available.

- All eyewash stations should be reachable within 10 seconds from the areas where a splash or eye contamination is likely to occur.
- Pathways to eyewash stations should be free of barriers such as locked or latched doors (swinging doors are allowed), equipment, material storage, or poor housekeeping.
- All eyewashes should have monthly inspections to ensure they are operating properly. Plumbed eyewash stations need clean bowls, dust covers for the nozzles, and good water pressure. All eyewash stations should be protected from freezing and provide room temperature to lukewarm flushing fluids.
- Activating handles should start the flow of fluids immediately. Fluids should flow for at least 15 minutes.
- On a weekly basis, check plumbed eyewash stations to ensure that they are clean and working correctly. Use inspection check sheets for annual, monthly, and weekly inspections and keep copies of these records.

While emergency eyewashes are important in the workplace, using safe work practices can prevent the need to use them. Learn about the chemicals and materials you work with by reading the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for information on hazards, precautions, and recommended personal protective equipment (PPE). If you are working with chemicals that can splash or materials that may fly into your eyes, wear safety glasses with side-shields or splash goggles.

Know where the emergency eyewash stations are located in your workplace and how to use them. If your eyes are accidentally injured, immediately flush them with water or eyewash solution for at least 15 minutes. When you start flushing your eye, hold your eyelids open and roll your eyeballs around to allow the fluid to flow on all of the surfaces of the eye and under the eyelid. Seek medical attention as soon as possible after flushing your eye.





CLASSROOM SAFETY

Working in a classroom may not seem like a hazardous occupation, but every workplace has hazards and risks.

Teachers, Instructional Aides, and other classroom employees should pay attention to their own safety while educating students.

- Use good ergonomics to reduce the risk of strain or sprain injuries.
- To protect your back, try to find ways reduce lifting like using steps up to the changing table, sink, or fountain.
- Avoid bending or hunching over when wiping or setting low tables or cots; bending your knees and keeping your back straight protects your back during these tasks.
- Working around furniture, numerous classroom materials, and students increases the risk of slips, trips and falls; wear sturdy, comfortable shoes with good traction.
- Walk slowly and avoid rushing while carrying loads or students, which can obstruct your view. Clean up scattered materials on the floor between activities. Ensure that spills are cleaned up immediately and rugs are secured; everyone in the school is responsible for reducing slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Infection control reduces the spread of germs. Wash your hands after handling sick persons, changing diapers, helping students in the bathroom, before preparing food, before eating, and before leaving for the day. Frequently wash down tables, counters, and sinks with a mild bleach solution. Smocks or aprons reduce germ transmittal, especially with infant care. Consider vaccination against chicken pox, hepatitis B, measles, rubella, mumps, polio, tetanus, and diphtheria, all of which can cause serious illness.
- When supervising students in outdoor play or athletic activities, be aware of sun safety. Wear a hat and sunscreen to protect against harmful UV rays; covered or shaded play areas are ideal. Outdoor activities can lead to heat or cold stress, depending on the climate and season. Wear several light layers of clothing and watch for symptoms of environmental stress.

Education is a vital service to care for the future generation; you are a teacher and a role model to the children in your charge. While you focus on your own health and safety on the job, model safe behavior and ensure that the education setting is safe for both students and adults.



ARE YOU PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY?

Emergencies in the workplace cannot be eliminated, but if you have an emergency action plan in place and respond quickly and appropriately you can optimize efficiency, relieve anxiety, and in some cases, save lives.

Management commitment and employee involvement are essential to an effective emergency action plan. The action plan should be reviewed whenever the plan or responsibilities change.

How good is your emergency action plan? Find out by asking yourself and your co-workers the following questions:



General

- Is there a means of reporting emergencies and accounting for personnel before and after an incident?
- Who is the person responsible for decision-making during emergency conditions?
- Does everyone in the workplace know the procedures to follow in various emergency scenarios (e.g. fire, explosion, earthquake, chemical spill or workplace violence, etc.)?
- Do you know the escape routes and evacuations procedures including where to reassemble for a headcount or for further instruction?
- Do you know where emergency supplies are located?

Medical

- Do you know how to respond in the event of a medical emergency?
- Are you or other employees at your worksite trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid?
- Does the worksite have first aid equipment which corresponds to the possible injuries you may encounter? (e.g. emergency wash stations, personal protective equipment, oxygen tanks, ice packs, etc.)
- Are emergency response phone numbers (fire department, ambulance, medical facility, etc.) clearly posted where they can be readily accessed?

Fire

- Does your worksite have fire extinguishers that match the possible fire hazards?
- Have you practiced using the fire extinguishers so that you are aware of their operation and limitations?
- Have the fire extinguishers been recharged within the last year? (They must be tagged to indicate the recharge date.)



Spills

- Do you have absorbent material that matches the quantity and type of chemicals which could spill?
- Do you have relevant personal protective equipment that would be needed to respond to a chemical spill?
- Have you been properly trained in how to safely respond to a chemical spill?

Once you have reviewed your emergency action plan, make sure you are trained and retrained in the possible emergencies you may encounter, the emergency procedures you should follow, any first aid or rescue procedures, and in the location of emergency response equipment and phone numbers. In an emergency, an immediate and educated response can save individual lives, the school operation, and thousands of dollars in potential losses.

