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SERVICES

- Link sharing – contact us if you would like a link to your site or service from our site.
- Online documentation.
- Information assistance.
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“Your Safety is our business”

Reset the Safety Counter

By Gavin Bruwer

Well 2009 is over and I am convinced that 2010, with the soccer world cup, is going to be even better. In the past year I have had the good fortune of interacting with many of you in your endeavours to improve human performance and assisting workers to go home safely every day without injury. Thank you for your commitment to working safe, leading your people home safely and supporting your organization and the country's health and safety goals.

It is now time to reset your safety counter, developing proactive safety targets and measurements which will continue to bring us closer to making an injury free working environment a reality. For your safety program to add value it must stop measuring failure, but rather be set for success.

Choose safety as your mindset for 2010, and commit to recognizing and controlling hazards in your workplace, home and even where you play. Remember the ultimate goal is Nobody gets Hurt.

Happy New Year, and May God Bless South Africa, you, your families and the people you work with in 2010.

Preventing the Tragedy of Electrical Accidents

By Gavin Bruwer

Hundreds of deaths occur every year as a direct result of electrical accidents at work. What is even more tragic is that most of these fatalities could easily have been avoided. Simple training can teach employees how to work safely with electricity.

Human error, poor maintenance, improper equipment design and lack of training often add up to disaster for persons working with electrical equipment.

To this end it is imperative that all workers clearly understand the basics so as to avoid this unnecessary tragedy.



“Make sure employees understand the workplace electrical risks”



There are less hazardous ways of acquiring a new hair style.

Your employees must understand that:

- Normal workplace or household current can be lethal.
- Electrocutions may result from contact with an object as seemingly innocuous as a broken light bulb.
- Overloaded electrical circuits can start fires.
- Electricity will always try to travel to ground, even if it means going through a person.
- Failure to inspect electrical equipment before use can lead to shocks, burns, or even death.

Many workers probably have little knowledge of the above. Most take electricity for granted and rarely think about the hazards. Perhaps that's why there are so many workplace and home accidents and fires involving electricity.

Prevent electrical blunders by making sure that your employees understand the following basic electrical don'ts:

Don't use...

- Cords or wires with damaged or worn insulation.
- Electrical equipment that smokes, sparks, shocks, smells, blows a fuse, or trips a circuit.
- Unapproved cords or electrical equipment in areas with explosive or flammable materials.
- A cord with a bent or missing grounding plug.
- Metal ladders, hard hats, or tools when working near electricity.
- Water on an electrical fire.

Don't touch...

- Anything electric when your hands are wet, when you're standing on a wet floor, or when you're in contact with a wet surface.
- An electrical shock victim.

Don't place...

- Cords where they can be stepped on, run over by material handling equipment, or damaged in any other way.
- Cords near heat or water.
- Sharp fasteners or nails on electrical cords.

Don't tolerate...

- Overloaded outlets or circuits.
- Loose electrical connections.
- Dust or dirt buildup on machinery.
- Blind reaches into any areas that may contain energized parts.
- Combustible trash on or around electrical equipment or circuits.
- Anyone who isn't trained and qualified to repair electrical equipment.
- Attempts to use or start locked or tagged out electrical equipment.
- Unauthorized removal of a lockout device or tag.

“Continuously reinforce the do's and don'ts directly through toolbox talks and suitable signage”

Electrical accidents account for one-tenth of all job-related fatalities as well as scores of serious injuries, therefore make sure your people understand the risks and precautionary measures.

The most underrated key to workplace safety - Housekeeping

By Gavin Bruwer

In some workplaces, good housekeeping tends to fall at the end of the priority list for both management and employees. But that's a problem because there is a direct correlation between a clean, neat, well-organized workplace and a safe healthy one.

Good, safe housekeeping doesn't just happen. Nor is it something you can focus on once a month and forget about. It's a daily mission that must be tackled with energy, focus, and purpose. You have to plan for it, involve employees in it, and sustain it. But if you do, the rewards are substantial—fewer accidents, greater productivity, and a more pleasant, healthy working environment for all.

Essentials of an effective housekeeping program:

- Regular dirt and dust removal.
- Adequate employee facilities, such as wash rooms and locker rooms.
- Proper maintenance of walking and working surfaces.
- Maintenance of lighting fixtures.
- Attention to aisles and stairways to make sure they are kept clear.
- Spill control.
- Proper storage of tools and equipment.
- Effective waste disposal.
- Organizing and cleaning storage areas.

The maintenance of buildings and equipment may well be the most important element of good housekeeping. "Maintenance involves keeping buildings, equipment and machinery in safe, efficient working order and in good repair." This includes maintaining sanitary facilities, regularly painting and cleaning walls, and fixing broken windows, damaged doors, defective plumbing, and damaged floor surfaces.

One of the toughest jobs you face in implementing an effective workplace housekeeping program is selling employees on its benefits. But the benefits are many, so try sharing these with your workers:

- Fewer accidents and injuries.
- Fewer fire hazards.
- Fewer slip, trip, and fall hazards.
- Reduced exposure to hazardous substances.
- Improved efficiency and productivity.
- More efficient equipment cleanup and maintenance.
- Better control of tools and materials, including inventory and supplies.
- Reduced handling to ease the flow of materials.
- Better hygienic conditions leading to improved health.
- More effective use of space.

To achieve these benefits regularly, we suggest integrating housekeeping responsibilities into employees' jobs. This helps ensure that these duties are faithfully fulfilled.



Have you created an infrastructure to facilitate good housekeeping practices?

"A place for everything and everything in its place"



*“Define requirements
and allocate
responsibility – don’t just
assume its going to
happen”*

An effective housekeeping program identifies and assigns responsibilities for:

- General workstation cleanup during and at the end of each shift.
- Daily housekeeping duties for the entire work area.
- Removal of scrap and unused materials.
- Proper storage of tools, materials, etc.
- Inspection to ensure housekeeping duties are completed and done properly.

Never underestimate the impact of poor housekeeping standards on health and safety performance. It is often the underlying cause of most slips, trips and falls in the workplace. Start your year by clearly defining housekeeping requirements and allocating responsibility for maintaining a clean and tidy workplace.

Top 10 risk exposures for 2009

By Gavin Bruwer

When planning strategies and identifying leading indicators for the year I find it rather useful to review the previous year to try and make sense of where things went wrong. This approach not only provides focus, which is imperative in today’s cost to benefit requirement, but allows us to identify leading indicators aimed at improving physical safety. To this end I thought I would start the year by publishing my top 10 risk exposures from 2009:



Identify and engage your exposures

1. Scaffolding.
2. Inadequate fall protection.
3. Inadequate Hazard identification and communication.
4. Respiratory protection.
5. Lockout/isolation.
6. Electrical - wiring.
7. Ladders.
8. Motorized equipment.
9. Electrical installations.
10. Inadequate Machine guarding.

Although all of these exposures require some form of legislated attention, it is clear that the associated risks are not always understood or conveyed properly, thus their inclusion in my top 10. In my opinion 2010 should be the year of improving the understanding and implementation of risk management. Although inspections and investigations done in 2009 indicate an improved use of some form of hazard identification and risk reduction program, these programs are in the majority superficial, failing to address the minimum legal compliance requirements.

Know your top 10 exposures and maximize your resources by expending them in the right areas.

The 7 essentials of Safety

By Gavin Bruwer

The concept of best practice is widely understood, and most organizations appreciate the value of such information. After all, if another company has identified the most efficient, most effective way to do something, it makes sense to apply their ideas to your own organization. Why would anyone waste time trying to reinvent the wheel?

The same idea holds true when it comes to developing safety programs. Whether your business is in manufacturing, construction, or any other industry, modelling your own safety efforts upon successful safety programs used by top companies will help you do a better job of meeting your objectives.

Having reviewed numerous safety programs the following 7 essential elements have been identified as a fundamental part of those systems delivering success:

1. An identified health and safety program

Effective safety doesn't happen by accident and it's not a random occurrence, but rather a comprehensive program that addresses every aspect of safety and every corner of the workplace. Stop developing imaginary, unachievable environments and build your program on current compliance activities which can realistically be accomplished. Unattainable plans may look good on the shelf but they don't provide safety.

2. Ongoing training

Effective safety training is not a one-time thing. Combine human nature, the limits of anyone's memory, and the overwhelming amount of information we all receive every day, and it's no surprise that successful companies recognize the need to deliver information regularly. Ongoing interaction on safety in the form of toolbox and crew talks, regular refresher induction, risk assessment review and even safety posters are critical to a successful program. Never assume that once off training ensures safety competence.

3. Built-in verification

How can you be certain that your training is effective and your workers are living up to your expectations? Your safety program should include a variety of informal and formal inspections and audits to verify compliance and growth. This verification process should occur at all levels and have a behaviour based communication approach. The success of any program lies in the ability to verify its implementation and impact. The following three verification methods will provide for sustainable growth:

- Own internal informal inspection and observation.
- Planned management inspections, audits and reviews.
- External benchmarking reviews.



The other 6 essentials

“Dynamic, goal orientated programs provide the infrastructure for safety success”



Good discipline and reward systems give rise to improved self discipline, which in turn is the forerunner to that ever illusive safety culture

4. Investigation of program deviations

No matter how well-thought-out a safety program may be, there will be times when actual performance falls short of standards or expectations. It may simply be a matter of workers failing to follow the correct procedures, or it may involve a serious injury. Successful organizations don't limit investigations to incidents but also focus on individual or group deviations from set standards. This proactive approach identifies possible flaws in the system and allows them to be addressed before we are faced with the inevitable injury or damage.

5. Constructive discipline

"Discipline" is a word that often carries negative connotations, but it's a very positive element of effective safety programs. Discipline is not all about punishment; it's about ensuring compliance with the safety program and other rules, and offering corrective actions and consequences when necessary. Successful organizations use discipline as a behaviour modification tool rather than a stick. Time spent on constructive discipline is never wasted.

6. Rewarding positive behaviour

Drawing attention to good behaviour is as important as pointing out deviant behaviour. Keep reward programs simple in order to sustain them and remember the age old saying of "praise in public and discipline in private". Acknowledging safe behaviour is often more than enough reward. Even a little bit of friendly competition can assist in improving compliance with your program.

7. Document the program

The best way to offer evidence that your safety program is achieving your organization's goals and meeting compliance is to document everything. Another advantage of detailed documentation is that it encourages continued compliance with your organization's safety program by serving as a visible reminder of what needs to be checked and recorded. Remember although our legislation is self regulatory it is imperative that we are able to prove its implementation and this can only be achieved if we document our program.

"No program

-

No culture

-

No benefit"

Having all 7 of these elements present doesn't necessarily guarantee a perfect safety program, or that you won't have to worry about incidents and injuries. It is however a fact though, that organizations who address these 7 elements tend to develop a safety culture in which safety is considered to be very important. Based on that, it is also no coincidence that they usually have a significantly lower injury and illness rate.

Is your program based on these essential elements? If not, review it today because the benefits far outweigh any additional effort that may be required.

Safety Topic – Mini Inductions after extended breaks

Incident analysis and statistics have revealed that our systems are at their most vulnerable just before and just after any extended break, such as the December holidays. We experience a sudden upsurge in minor injuries with the inevitable serious injury following.

The simple uncomplicated reason for this is focus. People are only human and having said that, it is almost certain that prior to a break we are going to be focusing on our planned holiday activities, and on returning from a break we are going to be spending time reminiscing on how we enjoyed those activities. It is this critical two week period, one week before the break and one week after, that can deal the safety program a death blow.

So how do we overcome this serious but often overlooked risk?

The following pre-break activities are suggested:

1. Gradually reduce the production requirements, focussing more on the safe shutdown of the site or process.
2. Maintain supervisor/worker ratios. Supervision are often permanent employees and have additional leave, which often leaves work crews unsupervised.
3. Increase management and supervision inspections. Increased visibility will improve compliance levels and keep people focussed on the tasks at hand.
4. Pre-task safety reviews.
5. Inclusion of off the job safety in toolbox talks.
6. Give careful thought before allocating high pressure jobs at this time. Don't let poor planning or ineffective performance during the year compromise this critical safety period.
7. Before leaving for the scheduled break do a walk down to ensure the site/work

area is being left in a safe, uncompromised condition. By doing this you will ensure that employees return to a safe working environment.

The following post break activities are suggested:

1. Develop a mini induction program to be presented to all returning labour. This induction should include as a minimum the following:
 - a. Personal protective equipment requirements. (PPE)
 - b. Reiterate the health and safety policy.
 - c. Review legal responsibilities.
 - d. Review site/organization specific risks. (Top 5 exposures)
 - e. Review the emergency procedures.
 - f. Housekeeping and waste management requirements.
2. The following should be reviewed by supervision with their individual work crews:
 - a. Task specific risk assessments.
 - b. Safe work method statements.
 - c. Tool and equipment inspections.
3. Site walk down by supervision to ensure the work area is safe.
4. Increased management and supervision inspections.
5. Behaviour based observations and coaching.

Take the time to manage this critical period it will set the tone for the year ahead.

Food for thought - During the Christmas holidays the aggressive road safety campaign restricted the road death toll to 1050. What about the other 14000 road deaths experienced during the year? Are we as employees and individuals doing enough to keep death off our roads?