

Loss Control Services – 5 Minute Safety Topic

Is safety in the workplace important? There are many reasons why safety in the work place is very important. There are two major reasons that will be discussed here. The first is about employees being comfortable and confident in their jobs. The second reason has to do with cost of work-related injuries and illness. The role of chronic injuries and the importance of injury prevention are also discussed in this topic.

1. Comfortable and Confident When a person goes in to work at a new job for the first time, they automatically assume their work place is a safe environment. After they start working and they find unsafe working conditions, this may cause employees to become reluctant to do their jobs. People always want to feel safe no matter what it is that they are doing, whether it is driving in their car, walking down the street, or if they are at work. If an employee is constantly worried about safety hazards when they are on the job, this will undoubtedly interfere with their work performance. How does an employee concentrate and focus on their job when they are thinking about becoming ill or injured because of what they are doing? Certainly, there are hazards associated with almost any type of work but good management provides training on how to cope with the hazards and emphasizes reducing or eliminating the risks associated with those hazards. If employees are not comfortable and confident in their work environment because of safety issues, this will show up in low morale and lost productivity even if injury is avoided.

2. Cost of Injuries The cost of a work place injury is sometimes difficult to measure. A minor injury is not minor to the injured worker and this type of injury may indicate a need for correcting a hazard or work practice. If a person is injured, there are many things that add to the total cost. If an employee must take time off from work because of a work related injury, there will be added workers compensation costs involved. The cost of insurance premiums for workers compensation may go up. Other employees will have to pick up the extra work and that could result in overtime and less productivity if they are not completely familiar with the work duties. There is also possibility of injury to the employee filling the place of the employee that was injured if whatever caused the injury is not corrected. There is also the possibility of OSHA fines or other citations that result from regulatory agencies investigating a workplace injury. The cost of work related injuries cannot be strictly measured in monetary terms – companies with good safety programs are more successful in the long run and their employees know they are essential partners in the prevention of injuries and illness on the job.

Chronic Injuries: Injuries that occur over a long period of time (chronic injuries) may be very difficult to treat but may be preventable. When employees are constantly doing the same repetitive motions, an injury may occur over a long period of time, especially if safety precautions are not being taken. Two very common problems that happen are back problems and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Employees should have proper training to prevent chronic injuries and should execute the training correctly. Surgery and time off for work for treatment of a repetitive motion chronic injury is one of the highest costs associated with workers compensation insurance claims.

Prevention: It is not only possible but necessary to eliminate or reduce the risk of safety hazards. Things may seem acceptable with no complaints, but safety problems are not always easily recognized. Staff should be trained to recognize and report safety hazards – there should be periodic inspections of the work place. There should also be cooperation with the safety committee, staff safety experts and insurance consultants. If a safety hazard is reported, it should be investigated and corrective action taken immediately. There are numerous regulations that require employers to have injury prevention policies and procedures and these should be part of doing business. When it comes to safety, management should be the role model for employees. If employees see safety is a top priority for management, they will make it top priority also.

*** Think About Safety ***