

**ACCIDENT CAUSES & PREVENTION  
(ALL OFFICES)**

**OBJECTIVES**

- Staff will learn the definition of an accident
- Staff will learn common causes of losses
- Staff will learn preventative measures

Many people have a misunderstanding as to what an occupational accident is and accident causation factors. Because of these misunderstandings, we will define an accident and dispel a few myths.

An "accident" is defined as, an unplanned event that interrupts an activity and may or may not include an injury or property damage. An accident doesn't have to result in injury or property damage. If an unintended or unplanned event interrupts work, it's an accident.

Often, people discount accidents as acts of God. Employees and many supervisors believe they did everything possible to prevent an accident; therefore, it was an act of God. Acts of God generally refer to catastrophic weather related events, not occupational accidents.

Accidents are not an inevitable cost of doing business. No employee is expendable, nor expected to get hurt for the organization. We don't condone the belief, "Taking one for the team."

Accidents shouldn't be viewed as "freak" occurrences. Anyone that believes accidents are freak occurrences is protecting themselves or others. If unsafe circumstances exist, accidents are likely to occur; therefore, accidents are predictable and consequently, preventable.

Accidents are not the result of carelessness. We will not advocate telling employees to be "more careful". If an employee engages in unsafe behavior, being "more careful" will not prevent an accident. Accidents are prevented by establishing good work rules and complying with and enforcing these rules.

Accidents are caused by two undesirable circumstances, unsafe acts and unsafe conditions. Unsafe acts are behavior that permits accidents. If an employee were to commit an unsafe act while performing a task, it is highly likely that an accident will result. Unsafe conditions are circumstances that permit accidents. If an employee was working in an unsafe condition, such as using defective equipment, the likelihood of an accident is significantly increased.

According to the National Safety Council, 85-98% of all accidents are caused by the unsafe acts of employees. Unsafe acts do not automatically equate to carelessness. Unsafe acts generally stem from having no or unsatisfactory work standards or inadequate compliance to standards.

## **UNSAFE ACTS**

Examples of unsafe acts include:  
(*Discuss examples of recent losses.*)

- Operating equipment without authority or knowledge
- Failure to warn
- Failure to secure a load or improper loading
- Operating or working at improper speed
- Making safety devices inoperable or removing safety devices
- Using defective equipment
- Using equipment improperly
- Failing to use personal protective equipment properly
- Improper placement of work or task
- Improper lifting
- Servicing equipment in operation
- Horseplay
- Failure to follow rules

To prevent unsafe act type accidents:

- Think about how to do the task safely prior to engaging in the work.
- Warn co-workers of hazards. When a custodian is mopping the floor, use warning signs at conspicuous locations to warn pedestrian traffic. If something spills on the floor, warn co-workers of the hazard until the spill is cleaned. If equipment is damaged or defective, warn coworkers by taking the equipment out of service or by lockout/tagout.
- Comply with all work rules and procedures.
- If you are not trained to use a piece of equipment, don't use it.
- Don't rush your work or take shortcuts. Don't try to complete a ten-minute task in two minutes. Chances are that something will go wrong.
- Use all equipment, tools, and material in the appropriate and intended manner. Don't use a chair as a ladder.
- Use proper lifting technique, a lifting device, or get assistance.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Stop and mentor employees engaged in unsafe acts. If you see unsafe behavior, explain the consequences of the behavior and the correct method.
- Supervisors should be vigilant for unsafe acts. Supervisors are not helping an employee if they approve of unsafe behavior; ultimately, the employee will get injured. Upon observing an unsafe act, the affected employee should be corrected immediately. If the action is serious or egregious, the employee may be disciplined.

## **UNSAFE CONDITIONS**

Unsafe conditions may not appear to be the fault or responsibility of an employee; however, should an employee willfully use unsafe equipment, tools, or material, or engage in an activity in an unsafe condition that employee is committing an unsafe act.

Examples of unsafe conditions include:  
(*Discuss examples of recent losses.*)

- Inadequate guards or barriers
- Inadequate or improper protective equipment
- Defective tools, equipment or materials
- Congestion or restricted action
- Inadequate warning systems
- Poor housekeeping or disorderly workplace
- Hazardous environmental conditions; gases, dusts, smokes, fumes, vapors
- Noise exposures
- High or low temperature exposures
- Inadequate or excessive illumination
- Inadequate ventilation

To prevent unsafe condition type accidents:

- Think about how to do the task safely prior to engaging in the work. Ensure that you have all appropriate equipment, tools and material to safely do the job. If you don't have the correct equipment, e.g., personal protective equipment, tell your supervisor before starting the work.
- Inspect all equipment, tools and material before use. Make certain the item is in good working condition and is appropriate for the task.
- Make certain that you have enough space to complete the job. Many injuries are caused because employees didn't have sufficient room to do a job.
- Injuries occur everyday because employees choose not to say anything about known hazards. Employees identifying unsafe conditions should cease their activity and report the condition to their immediate supervisor for corrective action.

## **POLICY**

*Discuss all county policies that relate to accident causation and preventative measures.*

## **CLOSING**

*Encourage discussion about the presentation, and accident causation and preventative measures employees can take to prevent loss.*