



Risk Management

by Jesse Denton

Common accident causes are frequently linked to poor employee discipline

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Did you know that over 80 out of every 100 accidents are the fault of the person involved in the incident? It's true. *Unsafe acts* cause four times as many accidents as *unsafe conditions*.

Accidents occur for many reasons. In many situations, people tend to look for "things" or reasons to blame when an accident happens. This seems to them to be easier than to look for the "root cause" or basic reason for the incident to begin with.

Presented here are some of the reasons that work-related accidents occur. As you read them, recall if you have ever been guilty of any of these. I know that I have, and I'll bet some of you may have experienced some of these same things. It may not have resulted in an accident, but the next time that you experience one of these causes, you might not be so lucky. Investigations of workplace accidents have shown the following are frequently contributing factors to a large percent of the incidents.

Taking Shortcuts – Every day we make decisions that we hope will make a job go faster and more efficient. Often times when we think we are saving time, we have to be careful that we aren't jeopardizing our health or the health of one of our employees. Shortcuts that reduce the safety of the job aren't really shortcuts, but are opportunities that might increase our chances of being injured.

Being Overconfident – Confidence is a good thing. Overconfidence to the point of arrogance is too much of a good thing. Also, the old adage of "it can't happen to me," is an attitude that can lead to improper methods of doing your work, using incorrect procedures or sometimes the wrong tools. Any one of these items can cause an injury to you or to a fellow worker.

Ignoring Safety Procedures – Ignoring safety procedures, intentionally or unintentionally, can endanger you or other employees. All companies have safety policies in place and they are supposed to be followed. Such procedures are intended to prevent or minimize potential injury. Casual or cavalier attitudes about safety can result in a "casualty."

Starting a Job with Incomplete Instructions – We know in order to do a job safely and to do it right the first time, we need a complete set of instructions. We have all seen situations where an employee made a mess of a task or assignment because he didn't have sufficient instructions or the conveyed instructions were not clear. Remind employees when they are working on a job, don't ever be afraid to ask questions or get explanations for what is unclear to them. How many times have you heard, "I'm afraid to ask questions?" It's not dumb to ask, but dumb not to ask!





Poor Housekeeping – Anytime that guests, friends, colleagues or safety professionals come through your work site, whether it is the maintenance shops, storage areas, kitchen, offices, etc. the first impression they get is sometimes the lasting one. If the office is unorganized, the maintenance shops are cluttered and unorganized, or the kitchen is dirty, it portrays a sense of looseness and a lack of pride in the work site. On the other side of the coin, if they enter and see it neat and orderly, a sense of pride and quality of purpose is the attitude that they are most likely to leave with.

Mental Distractions from Work – Bringing outside problems to work can keep employees from focusing on their job. If this happens, it can be a hazard. Friends coming by while they are at work can cause a distraction and can keep them from focusing on the task at hand. Both of these incidents can put associates into a hazardous situation. Don't allow your employees to become a statistic; assist them to stay focused on the task at hand.

Failure to Pre-Plan One's Work – In the office or in other fields of work, it is important to pre-plan your work. First of all, it will uncover unforeseen problems and give you the opportunity to solve it and continue to work. Secondly, it will make the job go faster and more efficiently because you thought out the processes in advance of the start up and have the needed tools and supplies at hand to complete the task.

As you can see, each of these accident causes is the result of poor personal discipline, either on the part of the employee or the supervisor, or both! As a supervisor, set the example to your employees, and always complete the task the right way every time. And then expect nothing less from them in their performance. ✧

(Jesse Denton is an independent loss prevention consultant based in Atlanta, GA. He possesses over 43 years of experience, the last 25 years with major hotel and insurance companies in the hospitality industry. Jesse was honored in February 2009 by HospitalityLawyer.com with the Thomas G. Davis Loss Prevention Lifetime Achievement Award. He is available for consultation and may be reached via e-mail at: jldentonjr@bellsouth.net or by phone at 678-694-8586.)