news & notes

ARM AMPUTATION

Just five weeks after a 28-year-old maintenance worker lost part of his right arm in an improperly guarded bread wrapping machine at a wholesale baking company, federal safety inspectors investigating the injury found a coworker exposed to the same hazard.

On November 3, 2016, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration proposed penalties of $146,979 for one willful and two serious violations of safety standards at the facility. Inspectors found the company, which has production and distribution operations in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee, continued to allow employees to clean the machine without isolating operating parts.

Investigators determined the worker was using an air wand to remove bread crumbs from the machine and conveyor belt when he was injured on May 29, 2016, resulting in the amputation of his right arm just below the elbow. Federal safety inspectors found workers cleaning the same wrapping machine on July 7, 2016, without properly guarding and locking out operating parts, exposing them to amputation and other serious injuries, resulting in the willful violation.

Keep Your Guard Up

Be a relentless hazard inspector

Many common workplace accidents occur because people let their guard down. They get to thinking that nothing bad has happened so far, so nothing could or will happen today or tomorrow.

Unfortunately, that isn’t true. If you stop looking for hazards, one of these days, one of them is probably going to get you. How bad you’re hurt will depend on how bad the hazard is.

So don’t let your guard down. Don’t let that hazard sneak up on you. Inspect your work area at the beginning of your shift and periodically throughout the workday.

Check tools and equipment before you use them. Inspect personal protective equipment (PPE) before each use to make sure they’ll protect you as they’re supposed to. While you work, keep your guard up and keep checking for potential problems.

In other words, be a hazard inspector all the time. Here’s what to look for:

- **Obvious hazards** such as wet floors, poor housekeeping, leaking chemical containers, or poorly stacked supplies that could topple over on someone.
- **Hidden hazards** such as shocks from electrical equipment, burns from surfaces you don’t realize are hot, trips over objects you don’t see, and hazardous chemical vapors you can’t see or smell.
- **Hazards that weren’t there the last time you looked.** Remember that things change all the time in the workplace.
- **New hazards** introduced by new procedures or equipment. You’ll learn about new hazards in safety meetings. Then it’s your job to keep alert for them.
- **Old hazards** you thought had been corrected. Sometimes fixes don’t work as well as you anticipated, and hazards you thought had been eliminated come back to haunt you. Don’t be lulled into a false sense of security about safety.

It isn’t hard to protect yourself from hazards when you understand them and can recognize them. So keep your guard up all the time and inspect, inspect, inspect!
news & notes

SUICIDE STATISTICS

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) says that in 2015, four percent of American adults 18 and older thought seriously about suicide during the past 12 months.

More than 42,000 people in the United States die at their own hand each year, and the rates for completed suicide are up 27 percent since 2000. People who drank alcohol and used illicit drugs in the past year had much higher levels of suicidal thoughts and actions than the general adult population.

SAMHSA’s Kana Enomoto says “Everyone—family, friends, teachers, faith community leaders, co-workers, healthcare providers—can save a life by reaching out to someone in crisis and assisting them in getting the help they need.”

According to the Carson J. Spencer Foundation, a suicide prevention organization, the construction industry is in the top 9 occupations at risk for suicide. Men in high-skill and high-stakes occupations (like supervisors of heavy construction equipment) are almost 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide.

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On Top of Your Game

*Ten keys to job success and advancement*

1. **Take pride in your work.** Enjoy your job. Be enthusiastic. And don’t be afraid to show it.
2. **Always give it your best shot.** Don’t flinch in the face of tough challenges. Do your best, and you’ll be able to handle anything that comes your way.
3. **Keep up with new developments.** Find out what’s new in the organization and in the industry. Embrace change.
4. **Get involved.** Get involved in your job, your work team, and your department. Take advantage of training and development opportunities to learn new skills and gain valuable new work experiences.
5. **Understand where you fit in.** Talk to people in other departments. Learn about what they do and how what you do fits in with their work.
6. **Learn to make sound decisions.** People who can think on their feet and make good decisions based on the best available facts are usually the most successful. Develop good judgment and use it daily.
7. **Be flexible and learn to cope with pressure.** Develop a can-do attitude.
8. **Exercise initiative when appropriate.** Know when to take initiative and when to ask for direction.
9. **Be a problem solver.** Don’t complain about problems, solve them.
10. **Persevere.** Never give up the pursuit of a goal in the face of difficulties.

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You Can Do It!

*Develop greater self-confidence on the job*

Here’s what the California Department of Personnel Administration recommends:

- **Talk positively to yourself.** When you notice that you’re doubting or judging yourself, replace such thoughts with self-accepting thoughts, balanced self-assessment, and self-supportive direction.
- **Experience success.** Put yourself in situations in which the probability of your success is high. Whatever you accomplish, let yourself experience success and the good feelings that go along with it.
- **Take chances.** Every new experience is a learning experience that can build self-confidence.
- **Solve problems.** Don’t avoid problems. Face them and identify ways to solve them. Running away from problems threatens your self-confidence.
- **Make decisions.** Practice making and implementing positive decisions flexibly but firmly, and trust that you can deal with the consequences.
- **Develop your skills.** Know what you can and can’t do. Assess what skills you need, then learn and practice them.
- **Emphasize your strengths.** Focus on what you can do rather than what you cannot.
- **Respect your opinion of yourself.** Entertain feedback from others, but also rely on your own values when making decisions about what is right for you.