

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE UTAH SAFETY COUNCIL

SUPERVISORS CAN AFFECT FIVE FATAL DISTRACTIONS

BY CARL POTTER, CSP/CMC AND DEB POTTER, PhD



Carl & Deb Potter. Carl Potter will be keynoting the 2006 Conference on Safety & Industrial Hygiene in Salt Lake City in October

Workplace injuries cost over \$50 billion annually, according to the National Safety Council, so they are a major drain on profits across industries. On the human level, when coworkers, family or

members of our community are hurt or killed, the loss can be devastating.

Accident investigations usually reveal that injuries occur when something or someone distracts a worker on the job. He or she then hurries, takes a shortcut or decides not to follow safe work procedures, often

resulting in significant personal injury as well as destruction of equipment and property.

On the bright side, you can eliminate most workplace injuries from your company. Managers and supervisors have a significant impact on worker safety and have moral and legal obligations to provide a safe workplace. By identifying employee distractions and knowing what you can do, you can help workers avoid the devastation of an injury or fatality in your workplace. Consider these five fatal distractions and how to avoid them.

THE DISTRACTION OF PRODUCTION

Employees face a tough dilemma when they feel pressured to complete work but don't feel as if they have enough time. Often, they'll take shortcuts so they can finish their assigned tasks in time, and these shortcuts are fertile ground for accidents. To alleviate this distraction, consider the following:

- If your employees complain that they cannot get the work done in the time allowed, stop the job and listen to their concerns. You may need to allow more time or add more resources to the job.
- Collaborate with your employees to come up with plans that allow them to get the work done safely.

THE DISTRACTION OF TIME

The distraction of time occurs when the clock determines workers' decisions about whether to do a job safely or to complete it by a deadline. Some companies have policies that limit overtime pay. When these policies are inflexible and the production requirements are stringent, employees and supervisors feel bound to the clock. The tyranny of the timepiece also occurs when workers decide that they want to finish the work during a certain timeframe, perhaps because they do not want to work overtime or they have other work that they want to

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move on to. To alleviate this distraction, consider the following:

- Ensure your employees know that no job is so important that they should take short cuts in order to complete the work in a timely manner.
- Talk to your employees frequently about how working safely actually saves time.
- Discuss how much time an injury involves with investigations, lost work time and reports, not to mention the impact on worker morale.

THE DISTRACTION OF MANAGEMENT

Management can have a positive or negative impact on employee safety. When managers, supervisors and employees do not share common beliefs about the importance of safety, inconsistent communications result. Research shows that employees pay attention to whatever management pays attention to. If employees constantly hear about the need to reduce costs, increase production and improve quality while hearing little or nothing about safety, they will focus, like management, on everything except safety. To alleviate this distraction, consider the following:

- Be a positive influence by spending time every week with workers to show your interest in them.
- Ask your workers specific questions about their concerns for safety and health in the workplace.

THE DISTRACTION OF MONEY

Workers believe that the budget drives all corporate decisions. They may be right. If employees receive less training than they should have, and aging equipment is not maintained or replaced because budgets are tight, the number of recordable injuries goes up. To alleviate this distraction, consider the following:

- Review your budget to make sure you have funding for unexpected issues that relate to employee safety.
- Give workers, even in the lowest levels of your organization, the authority to tap into these funds when necessary.

THE DISTRACTION OF PERSONAL ISSUES

Personal matters present huge distractions to employees. Employees often bring to work their off-the-job stress from family issues, financial concerns or other personal problems. Without realizing it, stressed and preoccupied employees can put themselves and others at risk of workplace injuries.

You may find it difficult to recognize when an employee is distracted by such matters, so take time to get to know all of the workers around you and pay attention to individual responses, reactions and attitudes. To alleviate this distraction, consider the following:

- When you suspect that employees are distracted by personal issues, take them aside and discuss your observations.
- If necessary, temporarily reassign a worried worker who performs work that requires concentration to remain safe.
- Assure employees who are having personal crises that you have their best interests in mind and that your goal is to return them to normal duties as soon as possible, once the crisis has passed.

THINK SAFETY FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

As a manager or supervisor, you can have a tremendous influence on employee safety. You simply need to make a focused effort to include safety into every aspect of your role. By adopting and demonstrating a personal commitment to workers' safety, communicating the importance of safety relative to production and quality, and recognizing when employees are distracted on the job, you can have a very positive impact on your organization's safety performance.

Carl Potter, CSP/CMC and Deb Potter, PhD, work with organizations that want to put safety first in the minds of their employees so everyone can go home everyday without injury. As advocates of a zero-injury workplace, they are speakers, authors and consultants to industry. Contact them at Potter and Associates international Inc., www.potterandassociates.com.

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ATTENTION SAFETY PROFESSIONALS



THE BIGGEST THREAT TO YOUR EMPLOYEES IS NOT FOUND IN YOUR WORKPLACE. Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death in the United States for people younger than 40. For all ages, unintentional injury is the fifth leading cause – after heart disease, cancer, stroke and chronic lower respiratory diseases according to the National Safety Council.

Employees are safer when they are at work than when they are away from their jobs. The injuries that occur off-the-job have a huge impact on how a business operates and how its bottom line performs. As safety and health professionals we need to extend our knowledge and expertise to our homes and communities so we can have a greater impact protecting workers and their families in all aspects of their lives.

Far more of these injuries occur off-the-job than at work. In 2004, 4,952 Americans were killed at work and 3.7 million suffered disabling injuries, compared with 44,000 who died from off-the-job injuries and 6.8 million who were disabled.

Such injuries saddle employers with tremendous costs. The total cost of employee injuries on and off-the-job exceeded \$330 billion in 2004. Of that amount, almost \$200 billion was related to off-the-job injuries, the council found. Speaking at the National Safety Council's first annual off-the-job Safety Symposium, National Safety Council's President and CEO Alan McMillan said, "Increasingly, businesses are discovering that attention to employee safety and health, both on and off the job, positively benefits the workforce as well

as the corporate bottom line. Giving back to the community is an appropriate corporate motivation, and I support and encourage business leaders to continue these efforts and to do even more."

BUT WHERE SHOULD EMPLOYERS DIRECT THEIR EFFORTS?

They can start by following the numbers. The number 1 cause of off-the-job unintentional injury death is motor vehicle crashes, which claimed 23,900 workers' lives in 2004. Not coincidentally, vehicle crashes are the leading cause of workplace fatalities, causing 2,086 deaths in 2004. Off the roadway, more people are killed or injured in their home than in any other location in the community.

Injuries that occur off-the-job have a huge impact on how a business operates

Employers are affected by what happens to an employee's family. If a worker's child, parent, spouse or other family member becomes sick or injured, the employee most likely will miss work, and if the family member is covered by the company's insurance policy, the employer may cover much of the costs.

Check out the Utah Safety Council's new Safety Fact Sheets found on our website. Topics addressed discuss safety in the home, recreational safety, driving safety and occupational safety. www.utahsafetycouncil.org

2004 UNINTENTIONAL INJURY DEATHS IN THE HOME

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Total Deaths</u>
Falls	12,800
Poisoning	9,600
Fires/Flames/Smoke	3,500
Chocking	2,000
Mechanical suffocation	900
Drowning	800
Natural heat or cold	600
Firearms	500
All other	6,700

Data comes from Injury Facts 2005-2006 ed.

SAFE BICYCLING



Bicycling is one of the most popular ways to get around, whether for sport, recreation or transportation. An estimated 57

million Americans

ride bikes ranging from high performance, 18-speed, touring models to "dirt bikes" equipped with balloon tires - and dozens of variations in between.

The National Safety Council offers the following tips for safe and enjoyable bicycling:

- Obey traffic rules. Get acquainted with ordinances. Cyclists must follow the same rules as motorists.
- Know your bike's capabilities. Remember that bicycles differ from motor vehicles; they're smaller and can't move as fast. Bicycles can change direction more easily, stop faster and move through smaller spaces.
- Ride in single file with traffic, not against it. Bicycling two abreast can be dangerous. Cyclists should stay as far right on the pavement as possible, watching for opening car doors, sewer gratings, soft shoulders, broken glass and other debris. Remember to keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead.
- Make safe turns and cross intersections with care. Signal turns half a block before the intersection, using the correct hand signals (left arm straight out for left turn; forearm up for right turn). When traffic is heavy and the cyclist has to turn left, it is best to dismount and walk the bicycle across the street at the crosswalk.
- Before riding into traffic: stop, look left, right, left again, and over your shoulder.
- Always be seen. Be sure the bicycle has three sets of reflectors; front and rear, wheel and pedal. During the day, cyclists should wear bright clothing. Nighttime cycling is not advised, but if riding at night is necessary, retro reflective clothing, designed to bounce back motorists' headlight beams, will make cyclists more visible.
- Wear a helmet. Head injuries cause about 85

percent of all bicycling fatalities. The head is usually the first to experience the impact of a collision. The results from collisions without the protection of a helmet for the brain, can be deadly.

A properly designed helmet has four characteristics:

1. A stiff outer shell designed to distribute impact forces and protect against sharp objects.
2. An energy-absorbing liner at least one-half inch thick.
3. A chin strap and fastener to keep the helmet in place.
4. It should be lightweight, cool in hot weather and fit comfortably.

There is no limit to the fun and healthful exercise gained from bicycling. Being careful, always will give riders safer trips and greater peace of mind.

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- (2) Antiseptic Towelettes

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TAKING TOXINS HOME



Workers can carry hazardous substances home from work in a variety of ways, unwittingly exposing their families to these substances. This can cause various health effects, including respiratory problems, neuralgic disorders and fatal poisonings.

In the 1990s, NIOSH conducted a study on the problem of "take home toxins." The study documented cases in 28 countries and 36 U.S. states, and covered a wide variety of materials, industries and occupations.

According to the NIOSH report, workers can expose their family members to hazardous substances in a variety of ways, including:

- Work clothes. Beryllium, lead, pesticides and other chemicals have all been carried home on clothing.
- Washing machines and dryers also can become contaminated, poisoning the person doing the laundry as well as contaminating other clothing items.
- Tools and equipment. Mercury, pesticides, PCBs and radioactive material on hand tools and other equipment have contaminated homes and vehicles.
- Items brought home. Bags, rags, metal drums and scrap lumber brought home from work have poisoned family members.
- Cottage industries. Asbestos, lead, parathion and mercury have contaminated the home where work was done on home property.
- Worker's body. A worker's hands can pass dangerous materials to family members.
- Farming. Families who live on the property where farming is done can be exposed to pesticides, caustic substances and a hormone-like chemical that can poison them or cause them to have allergic reactions.

Prevention is the best defense against bringing toxins into the home

Prevention is the best defense against bringing toxins into the home, NIOSH reported. For those who work away from home, safe practices include:

- Use good safety practices to reduce exposure.
- Leave soiled clothes at work.
- Change clothes before leaving work.
- Store nonwork clothes away from work clothes.
- Shower before leaving work.
- Do not take tools, packaging or similar items home.
- Launder work clothes separately.
- Prevent family members from visiting the work area.

Safe practices for those who work in the home:

- Keep work areas and living areas separate.
- Keep family members out of the work area.
- Store hazardous substances properly.
- Dispose of dangerous materials properly.
- Wash work clothes separately.

For more information, go to NIOSH's "Take Home Toxins" Webpage at www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hometox.

MORE VALUE WITH YOUR BENEFITS!



The Utah Safety Council is excited to announce that we have added over 70 new VHS and DVD titles to our safety library last quarter. Members of the Utah Safety Council enjoy free rentals from our Safety Library. All of these new titles are listed on our website at www.utahsafetycouncil.org

TEN STEPS TO REPORTING WORKPLACE INCIDENTS



You've identified the hazards, you've conducted the analysis and you've implemented controls to eliminate or reduce the

hazards. But what happens if an incident still occurs?

The first step is to investigate the incident. Why? When you investigate an incident, you will uncover the cause of the hazard and then be able to determine how to correct it. While such an investigation sounds reactive, the corrective action you take as a result of the investigation is proactive-possibly preventing a repeat of a similar incident.

There are different types of incidents all should be investigated. For example, although a "near miss" incident results in no injury or damage it should be heeded as a warning sign. If corrective action is not taken, the incident can occur again until an injury or damage results. Other types of incidents include those with injury, with property damage, with equipment/product damage, or with fatalities and recordable injuries.

HOW TO RESPOND TO AN INCIDENT

There are 10 basic steps to investigate an incident, according to the National Safety Council.

1. PROVIDE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Immediately provide first aid to injured employees until professional medical attention can be administered.

2. SECURE THE AREA

The area where the incident occurred needs to be roped or taped off, and any machine involved should be turned off and locked out. This prevents a repeat incident from occurring, while preserving all evidence for the investigation.

3. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL WITNESSES

List everyone involved or anyone who might have seen or heard anything relating to the event.

4. HAVE THE INVESTIGATIVE TOOLS AVAILABLE

This might include a camera, a video recorder, a tape recorder, flashlight, barricade markers, tape, tags and padlocks.

5. SAVE EVIDENCE AND RECORD DATA

The scene should be documented as it was found, and evidence should be collected or recorded.

6. CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

Interview everyone who was involved in or witnessed the incident.

7. REVIEW THE DATA

Examine inspection reports, maintenance reports, prior incident reports and analysis, noting patterns or trends.

8. PREPARE AN INVESTIGATION REPORT

Combine all collected facts, interviews and data into a written report.

9. DETERMINE THE CAUSES

Prevent future incidents by eliminating or correcting the hazard.

10. FOLLOW UP

Follow up to see that the hazardous condition was corrected.

Confusion often reigns after an incident. Everyone-co-workers, supervisors and managers-tries to help. To eliminate the confusion and control the chaos that occurs after an incident, set up a plan that incorporates the 10 steps outlined. Make sure all employees know the plan and their roles.

Safety+Health, 2004

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ClearOne Communications
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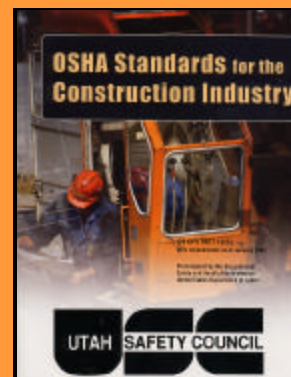
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