



Tailgate Safety Talk

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

Here are some actual examples of what went wrong in the workplace. You can decide if your work unit needs some refresher training or if there's a better way to do the job.

1. Keeping clear of operating equipment. Case of on-going difficulties with a head concussion when an employee was standing too close to a Gradall that was struck. If you're familiar with that equipment, it has a counterweight on the rear which usually extends into traffic on a two-lane road when doing ditching work. Not only is this a hazard for traffic, but employees on foot must remain clear at all times. Injuries from the swing radius of backhoe buckets can occur, as well. Never assume the operator can see you unless you have made positive eye contact.

2. Lockout/Tagout. We have a case of a treatment plant operator working on a motor with attached fan blades. He didn't realize or forgot that the motor was on a timer. The circuit was not de-energized and the timer turned the motor on automatically and several finger tips were amputated.

3. Harmful effects of chemicals. Even what you believe to be something that can't possibly hurt you - a mechanic got a case of dermatitis over his entire body after replacing a blown hydraulic hose. Excess oil dripped out of the blown fittings which resulted in a bad skin rash. You need to have an MSDS so medical providers will know what the stuff is and how to deal with it.

4. Thinking of better ways to do things. Removing the tops of catch basins and manhole covers has produced many lower back and shoulder injuries over the years, in addition to pinched fingers. There are commercially-available tools to assist with removing drain covers or a welder with a good sense of design can probably come up with a tool to do the job. It is difficult to think that we have to use our hands and brute strength to do things that tools and pry bars should do instead. Also, low back strains from pulling vector jet hoses out of drains and culverts. Is there a better way to do this other than by brute force?

5. Mowing in tandem - following too close. When mowing in tandem, keep clear of your partner. Every mowing season, someone is hit by flying objects when following too close. These include everything from small stones to steel reinforcing rods. Fortunately, nobody has been killed from this type of incident.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.