

SAFETY MATTERS

LEARN FROM NEAR ACCIDENTS

CLOSE CALLS OR NEAR ACCIDENTS ON THE JOB SHOULD BE CONSIDERED LESSONS IN SAFETY.

When you're driving the speed limit down the highway and another car pulls out in front of you, it's necessary to hit the brakes or execute a quick maneuver to avoid an accident. Chances are you'll make a mental note to be more alert from that point on.

Close calls or near accidents on the job should also be considered lessons in safety. A near accident is an indication that something is wrong. It's a warning that a machine isn't operating correctly, materials aren't stacked properly, or someone has done something unsafe.

WARNING SIGNS

If you notice a warning light on the dashboard of your vehicle, you know immediately not to ignore it. Unfortunately, unsafe actions on the job aren't always as easily detected.

- Below are some typical accidents that could have been avoided if their "warnings" had not been ignored.
- A shop employee stumbles over a two-by-four lying on the ground, fracturing an ankle
- A janitor trips over a loose floor tile and falls against a metal guard rail
- An office worker slips on spilled water and grabs a metal file cabinet, which falls on him/her
- A machine operator is injured when a hi-lo strikes the machine being operated

The proper handling of near accidents could have prevented the real thing from happening in the cases mentioned above. The two-by-four, loose tile and spill probably caused other employees to step aside to avoid slipping. Yet, nobody bothered to clean up the item or report it to a supervisor. And how many near misses did the hi-lo operator have with the machine? Chances are there were several. However, in all of these cases, nothing was done to correct the situation, resulting in an accident

KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

Unfortunately, a near accident is often forgotten without any benefits resulting from the experience. For example, if you have wounded yourself at work in the past, you may have a scar – a visible reminder of the injury to tell you not to repeat the action that caused the wound. However, near-accidents are often dismissed as lucky breaks.

How can you turn a close call into a contribution to safety? Below are two ways that you may already be using.

- Be safety-minded; voice your concern over near-accidents.
- Correct any dangerous situation and remove the hazard that caused the near-accident. If you can't handle it routinely, then report it to your supervisor.

Safety awareness is always important. It's a case of preparing yourself mentally to act in a safe manner and to recognize a close call as a warning. So when a stack of books tips over or the handle on a tool snaps, pay attention to the warning and do something about it!