



Human Performance

Human Performance Safety Talk

When addressing hazards in the workplace most of the focus is put towards the physical hazards that could harm us. For example, hazards such as slips and trips, electrocution, heavy equipment, struck-by incidents, etc. are the topics focused on when looking for things that can seriously injure or hurt us. While there should be emphasis on the many physical hazards in our workplaces, human performance factors that affect our work needs to also be addressed.

What are Human Performance Factors?

Human performance factors are factors that affect an individual's ability to work safely and efficiently. They may also affect an entire workforce, but for this safety talk we will discuss a few of human performance factors and how they can affect you as an individual worker. Factors such as stress, time pressures, distractions, personal abilities, and lack of direction are some common human performance factors that can play a huge role in a jobsite incident such as an injury or property loss. There are many other factors that we will not cover in this short safety talk.

Human Performance Factors

Stress- There is good stress as well as bad stress. We are more familiar with the bad stress. Stress from work demands, home demands, family problems, health problems, etc. affect us every day. A combination of high expectations for productivity and limited resources to complete work often leads to high stress levels on the job. It is important to be able to handle stress in a constructive way. Exercising or taking time to enjoy hobbies is a good way to relieve stress. Recognize when you are stressed and step away from the situation to take time to relax.

Time Pressure- We all experience time pressures at work. When we try to accomplish too much in too little time incidents are going to occur. Proper planning and reasonable expectations from clients and managers can help alleviate the stress caused by time pressure. At the individual level, it is important to speak up when there is unreasonable expectations or you need additional help to get a task done in a certain time frame.

Distractions- There can be dozens if not more distractions affecting us at any one time. Personal situations at home, a ringing cellphone, wildlife in the work area, and other people around you are just a few common distractions we face on a daily basis. It is important that we recognize things that are distracting us from our work and eliminate them. The smallest distraction has the potential to cause a fatality.

Personal Ability- We all have our strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes we are given



jobs that we are not adequately prepared for. It is important to have the proper knowledge and training to complete a work task safely. If you feel that you are not qualified for a work task, discuss the options with your supervisor

Lack of Direction- Unclear guidance by a supervisor can lead to many problems for workers. If you do not know what is expected of you or the work task you need to stop work and get clear directions. Many workers can feel embarrassed by asking questions and would rather proceed with a task before taking a moment to talk with someone who can clear things up for them. This can lead to an injury occurring or costly mistakes in production.

Summary

Human performance factors can have as much of a role in a jobsite incident as a physical hazard. It is important to recognize the role they play in our work day to day. When these factors interfere with our ability to work safely it is important to stop work and address the issue. Eliminate the hazards associated with human performance just as you would with an unguarded machine hazard or a fire hazard.