Near Misses

There are a number of common reasons why people don't report near misses. One is that we don't want to get into trouble with a supervisor or fellow worker. Another reason might be embarrassment. Nobody likes to admit to being part of an accident or close call. Or we might find it is too much trouble to report it - forms to fill out, questions to answer.

Of course, none of these reasons amount to much when you consider that reporting a close call might save a co-worker from serious injury or death. Imagine what it would be like to watch a buddy die because of a hazard which you knew about but did not report.

Let's say you receive an electric shock on a piece of equipment you're using. You weren't "really" injured, so you didn't report the incident. A few days later your coworker also received a shock from the same defective equipment, but also did not report the problem. Within days a third employee also received an electrical shock which killed him.

This illustrates what can happen when we ignore close calls in the workplace. A close call is a chance to identify a hazard and correct it before someone is seriously injured or killed.

We have all had many experiences with close calls or near misses in our everyday lives. The best thing we can do is to pay attention to them and learn from them. For example, most of us have slipped while rushing down a stairway. We may have caught ourselves before falling and resolved to slow down in the future. Another example is pulling out to pass when driving and being faced with an on-coming car. We quickly pull back into our own lane and tell ourselves next time we will make sure it is safe before we try to pass.

In both instances, there was the potential for a serious accident, but we were lucky. Likely we learned something by the close call and will hopefully be more aware in the future.

Close calls in the workplace serve the same function. They give us an opportunity to recognize that something is wrong and to do something about it before someone gets hurt.

When an accident occurs and someone is injured or killed, chances are someone else knew that the hazards existed. Think about that. Someone else probably had a hunch

that the brakes were worn out, or the emergency exit was blocked, or the chemical container was in a position to be knocked over or whatever . . .

How do you think that person – OR YOU - will feel after an accident occurs? Chances are you'll wish that the hazard had been reported.

SAFETY REMINDER
Near misses are warnings. If we heed these warnings and look for causes, we may be able to prevent incidents before they happen.
Don't let your inaction cause someone else's injury.