

Toolbox Talks 2

028: Preventing Common Injuries

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Think of a common task and what injuries can happen while doing it.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Preventing common injuries.

Discussion notes:

Background

The most common *fatalities* on construction sites are due to these causes, in this order: falling, transportation accidents, being struck by an object or being caught in collapsing materials, and contacting electrical current. The most common *injury events* among construction workers are, in this order: overexertion, being struck by an object, and falling. Topping the list of *common injuries among construction workers* are sprains and strains. Cuts and lacerations occupy second place, and back injuries take third place. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a high percentage of injuries are due to musculoskeletal disorders.

Some injury prevention best practices

- To prevent contact with electrical current, follow your lockout/tagout procedures. Using a meter rated for the voltage of the circuits you are working with, verify the circuits are de-energized. Guard against nearby circuits that could provide inadvertent contact.
- For ankle sprain prevention, replace shoes or boots that have worn treads, flattened cushions, or worn uppers. Clean up spills and trash, to reduce the likelihood of slipping and turning your ankle.
- To reduce the chance of sprains in the shoulders, arms, wrists, and fingers, use the proper tools and ensure they are in good condition. Don't lift anything that is so heavy or awkward that lifting it requires undue exertion or puts you in a compromising position.
- Before lifting, think of your body as a collection of levers and line them up in a way that reduces mechanical disadvantage to your back, knees, and shoulders. Keep the spine neutral during the lift, by keeping your back in its natural curve rather than arching it or flattening it.
- Normally, we are told to "suck in that gut." But for lifting something of any size or weight, take in a deep breath and allow it to fill your belly with air. Exhale slowly during the lift. Olympic power lifters use this technique to prevent back injury.
- Keep your musculoskeletal motor primed. It's also important to warm up before doing anything strenuous, and you can do that by simply flexing your muscles a few times until they feel warm. Stretch only *mildly* before lifting, as hard stretching weakens the muscle (muscle strength comes from *contraction*).
- Pay attention to posture. Many back injuries are directly traceable to poor posture. Poor posture may exist due to the body's effort to balance and carry excess fat, or it may exist due to lack of attention to how you sit or stand.
- To reduce the chance of cuts and lacerations, wear gloves where appropriate and use tools instead of fingers to do such things as remove metal shavings.

Review and discussion

1. What procedures should you follow to prevent contact with electrical current?

- Participant's Signature and Date***

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