



# ACCIDENTS

## AVOID SHORTCUTS



This talk discusses the importance of following safe work practices and avoiding shortcuts to prevent injuries.

### Items for attendees to consider during talk:

- Have you ever taken shortcuts to complete a task?
- Do you know of someone who was seriously injured taking shortcuts?

## TALK

We all like to get our work done without unnecessary effort, getting the most out of the time and energy we spend on each task. And, sometimes, this attitude helps us find a better way of getting things done.

But at other times, perhaps because we are in a hurry, it leads us to take shortcuts and can put us on a direct route to getting ourselves or someone else hurt. All of us, at some time or another, have exposed ourselves to possible harm by shortcutting rather than taking the few extra steps required by the safe way. As kids, we hopped the fence instead of using the gate; now we cross the street between the intersections.

A successful shortcut—meaning one that results in no damage—nevertheless has a downside. It gives us the feeling that we can always substitute the quick way for the tried-and-true safe way and get

out of it in one piece. Unfortunately, that feeling can be misleading.

Take the case of the worker on a ladder who is almost finished with the job except for just a little bit that can be done by reaching farther than the safety guidelines call for. It's decision time: Get down, move the ladder, and climb up again; or take a chance.

What are the possible outcomes? The worker may luck out and finish the job by reaching with no trouble. Or leaning too far to the side may cause the ladder to topple and the worker to fall, resulting in a concussion, a broken leg, or even death.

*[Use cases related to your workplace.]*

What kind of choice was that? With the safe way, the odds are in your favor—so the decision to take a chance was not a wise one. Risking your neck to save a few minutes of time is a bad gamble.

Of course, when you come right down to it, most of the shortcuts people take aren't really aimed at saving time. People take shortcuts because doing things the safe way is "too much of a hassle." To avoid all this annoyance, they will:

- Use the wrong tool instead of going to fetch the right one.
- Climb the rebar instead of going over to the ladder.

*Continued on page 2*

**Talk Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor/** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Attendees:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_

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- Lift too heavy a load instead of getting extra help.
- Use a sander or chipper without putting on safety goggles.

*[Use examples from your specific workplace.]*

In every one of these cases, workers will have avoided the bother they had in mind all right, but they may run into some bother they didn't expect. Like, for

example, a particle in the eye that requires first aid or more extensive treatment, or a back muscle strain that results in several days' lost time. Or worse.

The safe work practices that have been established here are designed to protect you. If they sometimes involve taking some extra time, that should be regarded as a small price to pay for safety, because working safely is worth the hassle!

