

Reduce ^{your} Risks



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Too many times our loved ones or coworkers believe that safety rules or markings are “only for the other guy.” They aren’t. They identify the risks to everyone’s safety and they are pretty clear: Failure to do so (i.e., wear a seat belt, wear a motorcycle helmet, obey caution and warning markings) can result in serious injury or death. There are no exclusions. Serious injury or death can and will happen to anyone who chooses to not use the proper tools or equipment (including safety gear) or to not follow instructions or guidance. This is true no matter the gender or age and is especially true when alcohol or distracted driving is involved.

While alcohol is a legal recreational beverage, there are laws in every state that prohibit its use when operating machinery, including motor vehicles, watercraft, and aircraft. People apparently still do not recognize the dangers associated with ignoring these laws and continue to abuse alcohol both on and off the job. Whether someone is drinking on the job or just suffering from last night’s drinking binge, they are not 100 percent and are hazardous to your operations. Supervisors and coworkers must identify such behavior and take immediate corrective action. It really is the only way to help. When people are allowed to continue or rationalize their drinking habits, countless num-

bers of innocent people are hurt, maimed, and killed annually.

Those who realize the problems associated with alcohol use might not see the dangers of distracted driving. Drinking coffee or soda, smoking, eating, or talking on the cell phone are basic tasks we perform every day, but when they are done while driving a vehicle, the risks increase to unacceptable levels. Even at 2 miles per hour, reacting to a distraction inside your car (i.e., hot coffee or cigarette ashes spilled on a lap) will increase your chances of having an accident. All it takes is that second you are distracted to drive in front of a train or run a red light.

The following information from the Air Force Safety Center shows just how important risk reduction is to your good health and well-being:

Fiscal Year 2002 was one of the worst years in recent history for off-duty safety in the Air Force. There was a 38 percent increase in Air Force fatalities.

- Young airmen (ages 18 to 25) accounted for 70 percent of fatalities
- Alcohol was involved in 40 percent of the fatal traffic mishaps
- Motorcycle mishaps resulted in 20 deaths, 11 more than last year

Good judgment can prevent most fatal mishaps and includes:

- Maintaining self-discipline
- Remaining alert
- Controlling distractions
- Avoiding complacency

Commanders, supervisors, and peers must focus on identifying and acting to change risky behaviors like:

- Taking unnecessary risks
- Speeding
- Driving under the influence of alcohol
- Failing to use proper safety equipment, like helmets and seat belts

Perform a risk self-assessment. Are you using self-discipline to refrain from destructive habits, which may affect your alertness to the task at hand? Do you get distracted while involved in tasks that could result in injury or death? Do you take short cuts at work or other activities that may result in injury to yourself or others? Risks are all around us, but we have both the tools and the knowledge to reduce their impact on our lives. Good judgment and self-discipline will help all of us do just that both on and off the job! ▶