



Every single day we are faced with hazards; whether that is walking out of our house or at work. For a workplace to be safe, the employees must have the training and knowledge to be able to recognize hazards and take actions to mitigate them. All too often, hazards are recognized or identified, but actions are not taken to eliminate the hazard. When this occurs, the hazard is left to be dealt with by anyone in that work area.

It is impossible to fully eliminate every single hazard we face while at work. That being said, too many hazards are left for employees to have to deal with or work around instead of addressing them properly. There are many examples of this occurring in every single workplace.

Examples of Hazards Being Left to be Dealt With

1. A piece of metal is sticking up out of the ground in a work area on a construction site. An employee lets his fellow workers know of the presence of the metal; however, that is all the action that is taken. Anyone walking through that area still has to deal with that hazard. A more effective response would be to call a piece of heavy equipment over to remove the metal from the ground.
2. A leaky pipe is causing a wet spot on a factory floor. The leak was spotted months ago, but the only response was to put a sign up warning personnel of slick conditions. Taking the time to fix the pipe properly ensures employees do not slip on the wet conditions.
3. You see a coworker backing up in a skid steer every time they do a certain work task without a spotter. Being more experienced, you know that he is backing up blindly and if anything or anyone would be in his path of travel, they would definitely be struck. You make a mental note to avoid his work area. Instead of just making a mental note to yourself to stay away, take the time to have a conversation with the individual to discuss a safer and more efficient way to complete the task.

Summary

Do not just “deal” with hazards, eliminate them whenever possible. All too often, the time or energy is not spent to properly address hazards to make a work area or work task safe. It is true that taking some action is better than none at all, but often it does not take much more time to get the problem fully corrected and addressed to be sure no one will be injured by that hazard.

Discussion points:

1. What is an example of “dealing with a hazard” here at our site?
2. How can we eliminate these hazards instead of working around them?

