Taking Shortcuts Meeting Kit



The Acrobat and the Safety Net: A Safety Talk about Taking Shortcuts

Taking short cuts during a work task is one of the hardest things to prevent workers from doing on the job. Short cuts, no matter how small they may seem, can eventually lead to an incident. On any jobsite there can be a lot of procedural or safety-related rules. These procedures and rules serve to protect life and property. Every rule and procedure is in place for a reason.

WAY TAKE SHORT – CUTS

Shortcuts are actions that employees assume will save time and/or effort at the risk of being injured. Typically, individuals have both the knowledge and the control of an existing unsafe condition or action, but consciously choose to perform the action or ignore the condition. Employees take shortcuts for a variety of reasons, including:

They are in a rush to get the job done due to:

- Organizational deadlines
- Meeting a quota/prioritizing production
- Running behind schedule
- Getting non-functioning equipment up and running
- Changes in the organization or job roles
- A ‘time is money’ attitude
- Job insecurity
- The drive to work quickly

SAFE PRACTICES

Employees know how to be safe. They can follow basic safety rules and avoid injuries.

- Regular safety meetings
- Training on all equipment and tools
- Training on safety for every employee
- New or properly working equipment with all safety features functioning
- Reporting procedures for all accidents and “near misses”
- Sufficient emergency and first aid equipment
- Adequate lighting, walkways, and signs

- A clear exit and emergency paths
- All equipment and materials properly stacked and stored
- Manuals for all machinery and equipment

WAYS TO AVOID TAKING SHORTCUTS

- Hold yourself to a higher standard. Do not take the easy way out. Take the time and energy to perform tasks correctly. Make it a habit to follow safety policies and procedures.
- Help set the expectation that shortcuts are unacceptable when it comes to safety. If coworkers see you taking shortcuts they are more likely to do so themselves.
- Realize that shortcuts affect more than just you. They can result in negative impacts on production, property damage, as well as injuries.
- If facing a perceived time pressure, evaluate whether it is a self-imposed time pressure. Many times individuals put pressure on themselves to perform a task faster when there is no real outside pressure to get a work task completed.

TAKEAWAY

It is natural to want to take shortcuts in order to save time on a project or task. We do it every day, convincing ourselves to skip steps or half-heartedly complete them so we can have more free time. In some situations, we take these shortcuts because the risk is worth the reward. Some choose to save time in the morning by brushing their teeth for one minute rather than the recommended two, risking the possibility of getting a cavity, which can be extremely uncomfortable but is ultimately manageable. It isn’t life or death.

This is the difference between taking shortcuts in everyday life and taking them on the job. Many times, especially in an industrial setting, taking shortcuts on the job is a matter of life or death. A loose screw, an unlocked latch, or an unchecked gauge can result in death. Skipping that small step for the sake of saving 5 minutes on the job could eliminate any chance you have of spending time with your family again.

So when you’re thinking of taking that risky shortcut and saving a little time ask yourself, “Is the potential time saved at work worth the potential time missed at home?”

FINAL WORD

To boil it down taking shortcuts is just an individual choice. Sure there are many factors that affect whether an individual will make the choice to do so, but it is ultimately a choice that is made. It can be difficult to never take a shortcut when it comes to safety, but there are many actions that can utilized to eliminate the urge to do so. Discussion point: What are other factors that may lead to a worker taking a shortcut?