

## Be Your “Sister’s and Brother’s Keeper”

The subject of Best Practices, when it comes to safety in the workplace, is one for which volumes have been written. In any Culture of Safety, one of the most important aspects of this is to be your “sister’s and brother’s keeper.”

I want to share my greatest safety failure in order to help make a key point with this blog. I was the oldest of five children. If you are the oldest sibling, I am sure that you have heard, “Watch out for your brothers and sisters.” What I now share was my greatest safety failure.

One day, when I was nine years old, there was a function going on across the street in a neighbor’s yard. My brothers, sisters and I started across the street. My sister Deborah, the youngest at three years of age, was naturally the slowest and had started late to cross the street. Like a dog who gets focused on something, all Deborah saw was everyone in the neighbor’s yard. She didn’t see that a car was coming. The driver apparently didn’t see her. My family’s good fortune that day was that Deborah did not get run over by the car, rather, she literally ran into the side of the car and was knocked down. She suffered scrapes and bruises and was obviously shaken. As well, it shook-up my whole family, but most of all, it deeply affected me because I had failed to watch out for my brothers and sisters.

Now you might think, well I was only nine years old. However, when you are charged with a given responsibility, in this instance “watch out for your brothers and sisters”, you need to take it to heart and do it. I got very good at watching out for my brothers and sisters after that.

As I grew up and went on to a construction career this became a guiding first principle for me. Really, it became second nature to watch out for fellow workers, people on my crew when I was a foreman, my crews when I was a superintendent and ultimately when I became a dedicated Project Safety Manager. The best safety success can only be achieved when this principle is instilled in people and they truly take it to heart.

Part of increasing a safety culture is to emphasize the need for employees to always care enough to correct an unsafe act or condition. This means that people must watch out for each other and take action to help keep each other safe.

Companies must develop a safety culture where caring enough to correct an unsafe act or condition is valued and admired - even when the “lowliest worker” corrects the “mightiest manager”. The important thing for people to understand is that anyone is empowered to correct anyone found doing something unsafe. Further, that no one should ever be in fear of losing their job for taking this kind of action. To the contrary,

they need to be praised for their action. This great principle needs to become second nature for all workers.

We have to be our brother's and sister's keeper to perform like the leaders. We must stand for what is logical and effective, even or perhaps especially, when it is inconvenient. Why? Because life and limb are on the line and everyone needs each other to be safe.

For a much more in-depth discussion go to Chapter 8 – Be Your “Sister’s and Brother’s Keeper” in our book, *Safety Under Construction—A Quest for Safety Perfection Utilizing Inventive Thinking where we discuss in depth the psychological aspects of safety that include how we are affected mentally, emotionally and physically*. It is a must-read for individuals and anyone who wants to dramatically improve the Culture of Safety within your organization and make unlimited strides for safety success.

Go to: <http://www.SafetyUnderConstruction.com> in order to obtain a great sense of this newly published book on safety and risk. There you will see a representative preview and reviews of a book that needs to be read, taken to heart and shared. Lives depend on it.

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