

When It Comes To Safety, Excuses Can Be Dangerous

Here are classic excuses stated in real life construction:

- Nobody's looking.
 - Nobody told me.
 - Accidents happen.
 - Rules are for fools.
 - It's a calculated risk.
 - It looks safe to me.
 - It's good enough.
 - It will only take a minute.
 - I've done it this way for years.
 - I know better, but . . .
 - It's just a short distance.
 - I know more than my foreman.
 - I don't want to cause trouble.
 - I have to; I have no choice.
- It wasn't the right tool but I thought it would work.

In the real world excuses have proven to be fatal and costly. They are patterns of ignorance and assumptions. These patterns often express as excuses for not being observant, for not thinking clearly, for avoiding responsibility or for not knowing.

When unsafe acts are repeated over time without any consequences or accountability, the wrong behavior is self-reinforced, is reinforced for your peers who see you, and for those you train in their future work. Your unsafe acts live on even after you are gone. Unsafe actions gain momentum and influence future behavior in a destructive way. You don't get "do-overs" if an accident happens.

We humans have a tendency to believe accidents will not happen to us. And let's face it, we like the rush of beating the odds - like the rush gamblers feel. The benefit for shortcutting a safety procedure might earn you praise at getting the job done quickly - might earn you reward every time you are quicker than others who are doing it the correct and safest way - until you pay the consequence. It might not happen for years or may never happen to you. But it will happen to someone and you may never realize that you contributed to the root cause of someone's death or someone being seriously injured on the job.

The fact is excuses indicate an unpleasant reality we wish to avoid and usually involve a contradiction and the desire to avoid the truth. This is dangerous for safety. Be wary of excuses. Again, do not tolerate them but do get to the real reason the excuses are made and act as necessary to shift such a negative paradigm to one of real safety solutions.

For safety success to be achieved it is a fact that attitude is so important. No one should ever be allowed to demonstrate an attitude of indifference when it comes to safety in the workplace. We know that workers will follow the lead of their supervisors and management. Therefore they need to be stellar leaders who always walk the talk!

Doing the right thing, even when no one is looking, exemplifies the ultimate safety ethic. Such performance could never become ignorance in action.

When ignorance or inexperience is present it means that management and supervisors did not do their job from a training standpoint. That needs to stop. The burden always falls upon a company to train their employees to work safe and be in compliance, at a minimum, with OSHA Standards.

At-risk behavior must never be tolerated, which means that excuses should never be allowed to fall on deaf ears. To this end, accountability needs to be conveyed and demanded with consistency so that workers get the message and live the message. It is every person's responsibility. Employers, managers and those who directly oversee field operations must bear the greatest responsibility for workplace safety. Setting consistent and clear expectations will build on and improve your Culture of Safety.

Always, clear thinking and resolving contradictions are necessary skills to overcome ignorance and assumptions. The goal is safety perfection, i.e., everyone going home safe each and every day.

For a more in-depth study regarding making excuses in the workplace go to Chapter 6 – Surviving Ignorance and Assumptions 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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