


Everyone thinks about how accidents could've been avoided once they've occurred, but the smart worker factors safety into his responsibilities in advance—and shares these concerns with his coworkers.

How often do we seriously contemplate safety—both in our workplace and in our homes as well? I suspect that the answer to this is that we only do so once an accident has occurred. Of course, I hope that when you read this column every month the subject of safety enters your thoughts, but I mean really sit down and think about safety. What can we do that will lessen the probability of an accident occurring? This is really what safety is all about. Over the period of time that I've been writing this column, I have tried to point out a number of ways that we in the industry can improve safety in areas of our work environment. But, really, the basic answer is that safety is a goal that must be approached with the same energy and devotion that we use to strive for increased production or lower tooling costs, or better benefits, or any of the myriad problems we encounter every day. I like to believe that we can all make a difference, and one of the ways this can be accomplished is to put safety on our "to-do" list. Schedule a period of time each day, or each week, or whatever period works well for you to devote to the question "What can I do to improve the safety of my workplace?" If we would all do this we would be much better off, and just think of the accidents that could be avoided. Each of us has a personal perspective on safety and a unique way of protecting ourselves while doing our jobs. If we can all share this knowledge, we will all benefit. It would be to everyone's advantage to share his or her safety tips, and it would take so little effort that it almost seems a shame that this type of exchange is not more common.

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I recently read an interesting brochure from Federated Insurance. It stated that “If you haven't injured your back already, chances are you will.” Statistics say that more than 80 percent of Americans injure their backs at some time during their lives. This means that if you haven't already, there's a very good chance that you will suffer the pain that comes with a back injury at some point. The brochure goes on to say that with awareness and prevention of the causes of back injury, you can protect your back. It concludes with the very simple advice that, with proper exercise and using proper lifting techniques, you can help prevent or alleviate back injury. Now I expect that most of us have heard this type of information many times, but I also suspect that most of us do not consider the conse-

quences that can occur when we pick up an item carelessly because we're in a hurry and later feel it in our backs. This is an example of just what I am trying to convey to you. Even though we tell our people and even write out safety instructions, if safety is not in the forefront of our minds it does not get followed. We definitely need to keep safety on each and every one of our agendas.

If you wish to become more involved in industrial safety, the National Safety Council offers a program with both a certificate in “Principles of Safety” and an “Advanced Safety” certificate. The NSF can be contacted at 1121 Spring Lake Dr., Itasca, Illinois, 60143, or you can call (800) 621-7619. There are also training sessions available on OSHA compliance and workplace safety through National Seminars Group at (800) 258-7246. 

PICKUP LINES

- Use slow and smooth movements. Hurried, jerky movements can strain the muscles in your back.
- Keep your body facing the object while you lift it. Twisting while lifting can hurt your back.
- Keep the load close to your body. Having to reach out to lift and carry an object may hurt your back.
- “Lifting with your legs” should be done only when you can straddle the load. To lift with your legs, bend your knees, not your back, to pick up the load. Keep your back straight.
- Try to carry the load in the space between your shoulder and your waist. This puts less strain on your back muscles.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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