

# TOOLBOX TALKS

## Taking Chances

Why do some people persist in taking chances and others don't? How can you get your workers to realize that taking a chance is just not worth the risk?

Have a heart-to-heart discussion with them at your next safety meeting. Ask them when they've taken chances at home or work and discuss what could have happened to them.

Find out if they have had any accidents in the past. Are they more careful now? Ask them why they took the risk. Use the following safety talk as a basis for your discussion:

Two painters were working near the ceiling of a factory building. They decided to get a better angle, so they left their ladders and climbed on an elevated sheet metal duct. Both workers were seated on the same section of the duct when it sagged and broke apart. One painter fell to his death, while the other grabbed a building strut and saved himself. The survivor never took chances again, but was a hard way to learn a lesson.

Workers press their luck every day. They climb on equipment that is not designed for supporting additional weight. Law, safety codes, and company policies specify the proper procedures for doing a job safely. Still people fall from window ledges, forks of lift trucks, tops of machinery, and ventilation ducts.

Most workers know the safe procedures. Yet they continue to risk their lives by engaging in unsafe work habits. Why?

Here are some likely answers:

- It may be been too inconvenient to get the work done using the proper equipment.
- The right equipment and supports may not have been provided.
- The unsafe method may have been used in the past with no ill-fated consequences.
- Some employees may not have been trained properly to recognize unsafe procedures.
- Some people just don't bother to think about whether a procedures safe, as long as it is easy and quick.

If we are really serious about the business of safety, we will develop the habit of following safety rules no matter what kind of job we are doing. We will work only with equipment is intended for that particular use.

We are not paid to take chances. Instead, we must take the extra time and effort to obtain and use the proper equipment for the job. If safety rules call for a two-inch plank, let's not use a one-inch board because we think that it will probably hold us "just this once."

It's important to make safety a habit. That means following the correct procedures every time, even when we're tempted to take a short-cut.



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## Taking Chances Page 2

How can we be sure we will do this?

1. Here is a tried-and-true formula for success:
2. Start each task with an eye toward anticipating what could go wrong.
3. Next, mentally run through all of the safety procedures you have been taught.
4. If you have any questions or concerns, now is the time to check with your supervisor before you start the job.
5. Then, obtain the proper equipment to accomplish the task safely.

If you still feel rushed or tempted to bypass procedures, stop and think about the ruptured duct and the painter who didn't make it.

### Checklist for the supervisor:

- Do your employees use the right equipment for the job?
- Do you provide the correct equipment for them or is it difficult to obtain?
- Have you observed employees using the unsafe methods while doing their work?
- Do you immediately correct any employee using improper procedures?
- Have you noticed any employees for failing to follow safety rules?
- Do you discipline employees for failing to follow safety rules?
- Do you provide additional training for repeat offenders?
- Have you made it clear to your employees the consequences of unsafe behavior?
- Do they understand that dangers involved?
- Do you feel comfortable discussing safety concerns or questions with you?

### For the employees:

- Do you plan out each task while anticipating what could go wrong?
- Do you mentally run through all the safety procedures that you have been taught before you begin each task?
- If you have any questions, do you feel free to discuss them with your supervisor?
- Do you always obtain the correct equipment for the job?
- Do you inform your supervisor of any unsafe conditions?
- Do you use the proper personal protective equipment and is it in good condition?



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