

## *Safety Guru - Spring 2018*

OK – so there may be some discussion on climate change and how things are getting warmer (for some areas). But this winter is starting off to be another one of those with more “below average” days and by now there are probably some lessons learned regarding draining lines and keeping sidewalks and roadways clear of ice and snow. Which is in a way heading us towards the theme of this issue’s Safety Guru focus. Job Safety Analysis. Normally when we hear the Job Safety Analysis or JSA term – we think about management’s obligation to identify ALL safety issues in the workplace and tell us how we are supposed to respond to each and every condition. Well – I can just about assure you that even the most conscientious employer will miss something along the way. That’s why I am going to focus on what each of us need to do every time we start a new task or assignment.



It’s true that the general requirement for JSA is on the shoulders of our employers and most do a reasonable job in providing Personal Protection Equipment, Engineered safety elements and also good standard operating procedures that incorporate safe work practice. I am also certainly NOT saying to forget about doing those updates and assessments of the worksite as these should be part of every safety program. What I am saying is that sometimes we get caught up in other things or repetitive work and we may on occasion, not pay attention to subtle changes or even big changes in what is going on around us.

It’s pretty easy to concentrate on a high level discussion about who is going to win the Super Bowl and walk out onto the sidewalk and not notice that a fine rain has glazed over everything and you are about to slip on the surface and potentially be out of work with a broken hip ... These types of things happen all the time. We get used to doing things – especially the day to day things and don’t notice things that can impact our personal and others safety.

For some reason, it seems more and more people driving in Minnesota lose their brains when there is a little snow, rain, fog or even construction. Our employer couldn’t possibly write a policy to cover all the conditions that we encounter while driving a vehicle on our roadways. There is always something that comes up that is in the category of something we have never seen before. That’s why we need to re-focus our attention on taking a look at every task we undertake. I am not saying we need to reinvent the wheel, but take even just a few seconds to look around and see if there is anything different or something happening that may impact our activity. If it’s raining - or still snowing – that can impact a lot of things. If our task is in the right of way and the precip is causing reduced visibility or traction, maybe greater separation distances or a larger work zone is in order.

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If we are using a ladder or on a platform – is the precip going to elevate concern over maintaining position to do our task.

Other things that also come into play would be our coworkers. Is the person or crew that you are working with familiar with the activities being conducted. Is everyone’s head in the game. Maybe Joe or Sue had been off work for a while with a bad case of the flu or maybe has some distractions that interfere with their ability to hear or focus on the job at hand. Let’s hope they aren’t the ones holding the ladder for you while you change that D.O. cable over the aeration tank and let go just as you reach out to set the probe in place. Whether it’s 10 below or 80 above zero, it isn’t any fun falling into a tank!

Those of you in smaller utilities have even more things to consider. The Mayor and Council don’t necessarily want anyone to get injured on the job, but the reality of the situation is that smaller cities and systems don’t have the types of resources available that some of the larger systems do. WE need to again assess what we are doing and how to best do those assigned duties in a safe manner. The odds keep getting stacked against us when we do shortcuts. I know there are a lot of “older” members of the workforce that have been doing some less than safe activities – but it is basically dumb luck that they weren’t injured or worse. Confined Space entry comes into mind. When some of the workforce started – there weren’t dependable gas monitors and a lot of entries were made without the benefit of proper procedures. Again, times were different and I would estimate the conditions of some of our systems had a lot less hazards. Less traffic, less loading and probability of hazardous atmospheres. In any case, today we have very good PPE and monitoring equipment – **SO USE IT!** Each and Every Time you do a permit entry.

I could go on for 20 or 30 pages about examples of how to do JSA’s – but I will leave it at this: Always be aware of your surroundings and the impacts that can occur to activity that you are conducting. We certainly will miss things from time to time, but it is far better to continually rethink and observe than to have to wake up in a hospital or see a coworker injured by not paying attention.

Keep those comments and questions coming in – Submit them to either the Editor or webmaster through email or you can always mail to: MWOA, 300 Douglas Drive. Buffalo, MN 55313.

As always – be safe on and off the Job!

Safety Guru

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