

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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A Guide to Putting Safety First by SBC Staff

We all know that an ounce of prevention is worth of pound of cure. What we sometimes forget is that safety in the plant goes way beyond remembering to wear personal protective equipment. This isn't to say that hard hats, gloves, safety glasses, hearing protection and steel-toe footwear don't remain the most effective (and easiest) way to prevent injury. However, there's more to safety and an effective safety program than what is worn to work each day. Take a few minutes to bear in mind a few other important aspects of safety in your workplace and consider some of the many ways your colleagues are working to put "safety first" in their plants.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Safe work practices include a company's general workplace rules and other operation specific rules. For example, even when a hazard is enclosed, exposure can occur when maintenance is necessary. Through established safe work practices, employee exposure to hazards can be further reduced. The following are several OSHA identified safe work practices and standards that all truss plants should strongly consider incorporating into their safety program: respiratory protection, lockout/tagout, machine guarding and forklifts. Clear and concise signage posted throughout the plant reminds employees of these standards on a daily basis.

"We are what we repeatedly do, so excellence is not an act, it's a habit," commented Tim Rouch, President of Gang-Nail Truss. "We make safety a priority every day. For example, each morning starts out with a safety inspection of our equipment and our truck drivers complete a safety checklist."

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

While safe work practices may be considered forms of administrative controls by OSHA, it also uses administrative controls to mean other measures aimed at reducing employee exposure. For example, if feasible, truss plants can use additional relief workers, allow for exercise breaks to vary body motions and rotate workers through different jobs to reduce stress or repetitive motions on one part of the body. This is another area where Rouch emphasizes safety on a daily basis. By mandating short exercise breaks for his plant employees, he provides time in the day for proper stretching and preparation for the day's work. He has also implemented personnel rotation within production teams and installed counter-height work tables in production areas to avoid injuries due to repetitive motion and excessive bending.

"It's true that exercise warms and loosens muscles and increases heart rates," remarked Rouch. "But more importantly, it reinforces the company's concepts and commitment to safety, first thing each and every day."

EMERGENCY PREPARATION & MEDICAL PROGRAMS

Ines Flores-Chelson, Human Resources/Risk Manager for California Truss Company in Perris, CA, reminds us that in the event of a medical emergency, panic and the human body's natural reaction to crisis can cause procedures to be neglected. Flores-Chelson makes a good case for implementing crisis management tactics long before a medical emergency occurs. In a perfect world, she says, "someone gets injured, and everyone, as trained, will fall into place, and the injured employee, with his injury properly attended to, enters a medical facility, and all is well with the world. WRONG!"

Flores-Chelson indicates that First Aid and CPR instruction can teach the crucial basics that a first responder needs until an emergency medical technician arrives on the scene. Unfortunately, if a first responder reacts while in a state of shock, important decisions may be overlooked, such as proper first aid administration. Speaking from experience, she comments, "in an emergency, every decision is crucial and split second." Keep in mind, however, that no amount of instruction can teach you how to remain calm in the event of an emergency. Thus, there exists an inherent risk of liability in your operation when it comes to crisis situations.

Similar to her plant's emergency accident plan, Flores-Chelson recommends that in order to avoid liabilities associated with first aid negligence, your company needs to secure reliable volunteers to be on your Emergency Response Team. The members selected for the team should undergo an interview by the company Safety Coordinator and Team, to determine if they will be capable of reacting calmly and sensibly in an emergency situation. Once the appropriate personnel are selected, their names should be posted in a conspicuous area, so that there can be no question as to who is qualified to attend to an injured employee. The Emergency Response Team (ERT) list should be reviewed by the Safety Coordinator and Team on a quarterly basis, to keep the ERT fully staffed and certified, and to keep an accurate, updated list with the names of those who are Red Cross CPR and First Aid certified.

For emergency situations, the company should also keep an Emergency Response Kit. This kit is in addition to a standard First Aid Kit and should contain items to be used only in an emergency situation. Flores-Chelson recommends the kits should contain the following:

- 5 rolls of 2" and 3" gauze
- Saline
- 5 rolls of 2" and 3" ace wraps
- 2 boxes of Kelfa Pads
- 5 bottles of Betadine Solution
- 5 bottles of Saline Solution
- 5 Cold Pack Units
- 1 box of Rubber Gloves
- 1 box of ½ Gallon Zip Lock Bags
- Easy access to ice

The kit should be in an extremely accessible location that is familiar to all of the members of the ERT. Ensuring that a first responder will have everything he or she needs to react to an injury in a designated area will allow the trained team to remain calm and not have to scramble when attending to an emergency.

Flores-Chelson concludes, "While no one can be sure how he or she will react in an emergency situation, simplifying the matter with preparedness can certainly reduce the panic for a more favorable outcome for both the team and the accident victim."

TRACKING HAZARDS & ACCIDENTS

An essential part of any safety and health system is the correction of hazards that occur despite an overall prevention and control program. For larger sites, documentation is important so that management and employees have a record of the correction. Many companies use a form that documents the original discovery of a hazard to track its correction. The following example is Gang-Nail's accident report. Note the "Recommended Corrective Action" field.

CONCLUSION

As Corporate Safety Manager of Trussway, Ltd. in Houston, TX, Frank Madden knows plant safety like the back of his hand. Madden confirms that the utmost safety precaution you can possibly take is the initial training of new employees. "During the training process, the hazards of our workplace should be taught to the employee," he explains. "All hazards can be overcome and some even eliminated, but the employee needs to be trained to understand what they are."

Even the most comprehensive plant safety procedures are obsolete if there is no employee safety training. Likewise, creating a safety-minded culture in your plant won't happen by simply handing a new hire a manual to read or plopping them down in front of a safety video. Safety is an ongoing concern that involves a conscious effort by every member of your company every single day. After all, putting safety first can be a matter of life or death.

GANG-NAIL TRUSS CO., INC.
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VISALIA, CA 93291

ACCIDENT REPORTS

TODAY'S DATE: _____

DATE & TIME OF ACCIDENT/NEAR MISS: _____
EMPLOYEE START TIME: _____
LOCATION OF ACCIDENT/NEAR MISS: _____

VICTIM NAME(S): _____
VICTIM(S) DEPT(S): _____
NAME OF OTHERS INVOLVED OR WITNESSED: _____
NAME OF SUPERVISOR COMPLETING THE REPORT: _____
DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT/NEAR MISS(ES) INCLUDING A DESCRIPTION OF EACH VICTIM(S) OR EMPLOYEE(S) INVOLVEMENT(S): _____

RECOMMENDED CORRECTIVE ACTION FOR PREVENTION OF ACCIDENT OR NEAR MISS: _____

IF SUPERVISOR/ANYONE IS REQUIRED, COMPLETE NOTICE OF SAFETY VIOLATION FORM

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES/CLINIC USED: _____

COMPLETION OF INVESTIGATION: _____
COMPLETION OF INVESTIGATION: _____
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR: _____
SIGNATURE OF VICTIM: _____

Look for future topics on truss plant safety in upcoming issues of SBC Magazine! In conjunction with the creation of WTCA's new Safety and Health Program, the staff of SBC Magazine will begin a new column highlighting the truss plant's most critical safety concerns. Do you have a question about safety that you would like us to explore? Or, do you have an innovative method for handling a common safety concern? We would love to hear from you. Contact staff at sbcstaff@sbcmag.info.

Many thanks to those individuals who took time out of their busy schedules to provide perspective for this article: Tim Rouch, Gus Gomez and Benny Hernandez from Gang-Nail Truss Company of Visalia; Ines Flores-Chelson of California Truss

Safety: The “Four-Letter Word” at Time-&-One-Half by Frank Madden

SAFETY is the time-and-one-half of all four-letter words! Four-letter words have, for some reason or another, four letters. SAFETY has six letters. Therefore, it has half again as many letters. So, six is one and one half of four!

Stay with me now. The four-letter word has always had a bad connotation. This is a professional magazine, so I will try to limit my use of four-letter words in this article. But how many four-letter words pop into your head when you think about SAFETY? How about HARD? WORK? HURT? HAND? FOOT? BACK? HEAD? Or everyone’s favorite four-letter word: COST!

Put it all together and many get this notion stuck in their minds: SAFETY is a big COST that involves HARD WORK during which employees can HURT their HAND, FOOT or BACK by not using their HEAD!

On the other hand, HAPPY is a five-letter word. So is BREAK and LUNCH. We all could have happier employees if our only role was to lead them to LUNCH or provide an extra BREAK. Our success, however, is based on how well we lead our employees to WORK and how well they work within our cost guidelines. The ability to provide the customer with a product at a projected profit is what will make or break any company. That ability often hinges on how well costs are controlled.

SAFETY is a COST. Workers compensation, clinic fees, lawyers and bad morale are all part of that cost. When we install, or maintain, our safety programs, we should do it in a way that improves morale. If we are disgruntled when we install or maintain it, how well will the plant employees accept it or follow it? We need to have them be part of the PLAN and therefore part of the CURE. Safety bonuses are a great idea—hey, BONUS is a five-letter word that makes employees HAPPY!

So put some time-and-one-half into your safety programs. It will be a cost for awhile, but after you are successful, it is FREE—the only four-letter word you’ll ever need to associate with safety again!

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