



"I just don't understand it!!!
I was only standing there, not paying attention WHEN....."

Ever wonder why **Safety** seems to get such a bad rap? It is a very rare person who will say; "I'm so excited to hear that we are holding a Safety meeting tonight!" Safety has the reputation for being boring and besides who needs it? No one does, or at least until one day the lack of knowledge bites you with a vengeance. It was not that long ago that the odd fatality was just the price of doing business and

Safety was just "common sense." Safety training in those "good ole days," was just two words I heard often. BE CAREFUL! If you slipped and fell because someone had left a patch of spilled oil on the floor (after expressing a few choice words, usually aimed at yourself), you picked yourself up and limped away hoping that no one had seen you being careless for not spotting the oil.

I have more than a passing interest in the following story as I helped my young son at the time restore a Ford Pinto and painted it a bright red colour of his choice.

Less than a month later, a car crossed into his lane and thanks to seat belts he was not hurt. Had that collision occurred on the rear, there is a good chance I would no longer



Pinto right after paint job



Pinto after front end collision

have a son. No amount of money can ever compensate for the loss of your only son and I have never owned a Ford since.

Lee Iacocca was reported to be fond of saying that "Safety doesn't sell." The

Ford Pinto, also known as "Lee's car," was prone to catch fire at low speed rear end crashes. Even at low speed the gas tank would be pushed forward into four protruding bolts and rupture. A fix as cheap as \$5.08 per car by putting a plastic cover over the bolts was rejected as a now famous cost benefit analysis memo indicated that modifying all the cars would cost \$137 million while payout for 180 burn deaths would only cost \$12.5 million. How wrong they would be as they: a) had not factored in the many vocal burn survivors as well as b) the negative publicity that would follow. One fatal accident alone resulted in punitive damages of \$125 million. While that was later reduced, the Department of Transport ordered a recall of 1.5 million Pintos to be modified to prevent fatal rear end collisions. As a result of all of the negative publicity, (even with the fix), the Pinto was doomed and production ceased. This, or perhaps Ralph Nader's book "Unsafe at any Speed," was likely the turning point for car Safety, because from then on: **Safety did sell.** My pick-up has 8 airbags in it and I suspect if they ever all went off the vehicle would be a write off just for the cost of replacing them.

But why do we tend to ignore Safety rules made for our benefit? For example, the rule to never stand on the last two steps of a step ladder. The reason is simple. If for any reason you lose your balance you are in for a fall. However, that rule is often broken as we tend

to feel that “nothing bad is going to happen to us and in most cases it doesn’t. This in turn serves to reinforce your first decision to stand on the top of the ladder. You have just substantially increased the risk of a fall for what is likely a very small benefit. For those that think that it will never happen to you because you always follow the rules just keep in mind YET. Perhaps it hasn’t happened to you YET but if you are human **You’re Eligible Too.**

You are also “your brothers’ keeper” and bear some responsibility for their actions if you fail to bring unsafe actions to their attention. This is not always easy however, as we often live with hazards that we have become familiar with and are able to mitigate. A less experienced employee will often try to emulate what they see being done without the knowledge on how to mitigate.

During my airline years there was an employee rest/lunch room under one of the airport gate fingers. The tug baggage trains regularly passed by this room which had a door leading out to this heavy traffic passage. These baggage trains would pass by that door at a high rate of speed as they rushed to get the baggage to their owners in the shortest time possible. We all knew to look both ways before attempting to cross this “freeway”. Because of this hazard a new cleaner was warned to “be careful”. It wasn’t long before an aircraft arrived early and she rushed to meet the aircraft now at the far gate. She ran out the door right in front of a speeding tug. I was the guy with the red cross on my shoulder who was summoned to the scene. Her right leg was bent at a horrible angle and on cutting away the pant leg, saw the bone protruding out below the knee. I did what I could to stop the bleeding but was unable to stop her screaming as we waited for the ambulance that seemed to take forever. That did not have to happen and should not have happened. A warning sign on the door was the first suggested fix as was to make the baggage trains go around the finger but that would create hazards of its own. Then there was the idea of a 5 mph speed limit under the finger. Finally, bright coloured cement filled steel bollards were installed in front of the door to provide the person protection when they first stepped out. After word of the accident, you can be very sure that everyone was “being careful” (at least for a little while).

Another unnecessary accident, that proved fatal, involved a young man who had just joined our crew. He was in his “bulletproof” phase of life and loved driving the electric cart used to haul tools. He had one speed and that was “pedal to the metal” where ever he went. We said nothing as it was his problem.

One midnight shift we had a 737 parked out in the “boonies” that was being serviced away from the gate. The door had been left open and during lunch it began to rain. As he was the “low man on the totem pole”, he was delegated to go and close the door. He happily took the electric cart and was never seen alive again. It seems that he approached the aircraft at high rate of speed and when he applied the brakes he skidded on the wet, oil slicked tarmac ending up

under the aircraft. The first contact with the belly of the aircraft was with his upper body that bent him over the seat back. This broke his back and he died what is believed to be a slow death pinned under the aircraft, as no one missed him until after lunch break. Had we said something about his speeding and insisted that the 10 mph speed limit be obeyed,



would he still be alive today? That is difficult to know but there is the possibility that it would have made a difference. When you see a hazard don't just work around it, but do what it takes to mitigate the hazard to ALARP. (As Low As Reasonably Practical) through a risk analysis.

For Safety to be taken seriously it must function in a Safety Culture. You can reread about just what a Safety Culture is by reading Articles 11 and 12 printed in Jan/Feb and March of 2016.

A true Safety Culture should be part of any Safety Management System (#13 April 2016) and should encourage you to report hazards and near misses that have the potential to cause grief.

Simply adhering to Safety rules can save you and your fellow workers from ever becoming a statistic. Let's not learn the hard way.