

Horse Sense; Not Horseplay

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When you're a passenger in a jet plane thousands of feet in the air, the last thing you want the pilot to do is to engage in horseplay.

The same thing goes when you're traveling a two-lane highway and on-coming cars are approaching at 50 or 60 miles an hour. I'm sure you'd cringe if you thought one of the drivers was taking part in horseplay instead of concentrating on driving.

Well, horseplay on the job is just as dangerous, and like the cases of the airplane and automobile, the person endangered isn't just the one that's horsing around. Other people are involved.

Work areas are strictly for actions that are planned and controlled. Horseplay is uncontrolled, unplanned, and usually full of surprises. **There is no place for it on the job.**

A machine shop manager recently listed a number of horseplay situations which had occurred in his plant but which were eliminated when a safety campaign was started. Some of these horseplay tricks obviously were pulled by persons who were rather immature, while others seem like the type of jokes any of us might be tempted to try if we didn't know better.

Here's the list:

- ✘ wiring or securing doors so they can't be opened
- ✘ greasing of handles, switches and locks
- ✘ blowing clothes with compressed air
- ✘ and wrestling and striking each other.

Others included scaring people with loud noises; hiding other people's tools; filling employee lockers with heavy junk; tinkering with other employee's equipment.

Elimination of these detrimental acts was bound to cut down on injuries. The person who compiled this list of horseplay situations also noted that any of the acts might trigger long-lasting hard feelings or a fight which could cause an injury or dismissal from the job.

This brings us to the point that the reactions of human beings are not entirely predictable. Their reactions to a joke might range from a laugh to a punch in the nose depending on what kind of a mood they're in.

Not too long ago a case was recorded where some workers hid another employee's hammer. He reached into several areas overhead in search of the hammer and finally caught his finger on a sharp object which resulted in an injury that required an amputation. That wasn't funny. Likewise, jokesters who play around with compressed air are turning a hose into a dangerous weapon that can put out an eye, rupture an eardrum, or cause painful hemorrhage.

In addition to the injury toll, horseplay costs thousands of dollars annually in damage to equipment and materials, and this has a bearing on profits and jobs.

Most of us have a good sense of humor and enjoy a good laugh. But a sense of humor and horseplay are not really as closely related as they might seem. Horseplay often carries many of the characteristics of cruelty. And you can add irresponsibility and immaturity to that, too. No employee would intentionally do anything to cause another worker to be injured. So recognize the part you play in the overall safety picture and respect the feelings of others.

Help protect your security and theirs through

“HORSE SENSE,” NOT “HORSEPLAY.”

Disclaimer: Information contained in this handout is considered to be correct. If there are questions, please contact the Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission/Health and Safety Division.

