Choices at Home and Safety on the Job Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Choices at Home Can Affect Safety on The Job (Safety Talk)

There are many choices we make at home that can have major effects at work. Whether it is safety-related or lifestyle choices, many of these choices have repercussions that carry over from home into the workplace.

WHAT' S THE DANGER

CHOICES / PROCEDURES

In the high-risk world of utility operations, safety depends greatly on the **choices** that are made at all levels of an organization. The decisions that are made as to how we will handle a particular situation determine how safe everyone involved will be.

When decisions or **choices** are made because of convenience and not according to the **procedures** in place, an injury is sure to happen.

HABITS

When people are placed in situations, especially ones that are stressful, people will revert to what worked for them before. In utility operations, this **"habit"** can quickly lead to errors in the decisions or choices we make. Then it is only a matter of time before an incident occurs. **To help avoid this situation, it's important to recognize the things that form our habits:**

Knowledge–Understanding the task and safety processes or procedures for that task are paramount to forming good safety habits. We can educate people to the correct way to perform tasks and the best way is to teach them early on in their career.

Skill–The ability to perform a task safely includes experience with that particular task. Many line workers have been injured because they were given a new task they had not performed before and tried to accomplish it by "bluffing" their way through.

Attitude–The desire or **"will"** portion of the safety equation, attitude is about the person whose safety or life is on the line. Supervisors should have open communications with workers, which allow employees to come to the supervisor with problems that could affect their performance.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

SAFETY RULES AND PROCEDURES do not prevent incidents. It is the following of those **RULES AND PROCEDURES** that increase the chances an incident will not occur.

1. **Set up an ergonomic work station**

Provide your employees with the resources they need to set up their ergonomically correct home station.

- Use a rolling chair equipped with back support and ample padding.
- Position monitors 20-30 inches from your face, centered straight ahead. Your eye level should fall at the top third of the screen.
- Sit with your back and shoulders straight, with a few inches separating the backs of your knees from the edge of the chair.
- Follow the 20/20/20 Rule: Every 20 minutes, look at an object 20 feet away or more for at least 20 seconds.

2. **Get up, stretch and stay active**

Remind your employees about the importance of stretching their legs and staying active even as they're confined to their own homes. Set an alarm to take regular breaks. Perform simple stretches throughout your workday helps you stay relaxed and prevent overexertion injuries.

3. **Prevent slips, trips and falls**

Slips, trips and falls are some of the most common types of workplace injuries. When your employees are working from home, their environment doesn’t have the safety standards you have in place at the office.

- Prevent slips by wearing proper footwear, even inside your home – avoid slippery socks. Clean up spills, as well as mud or water tracked in on shoes, immediately.
- To prevent trips, keep the walkways in your home clear of clutter. Keep your house well-lit and make sure cords are safely secured. Avoid distractions, like your phone, while walking.
- Prevent falls down stairs by always turning on the lights and using a handrail when going up or down stairs. Avoid trying to carry too much – leave one hand free to catch yourself if you stumble.

4. **Pay attention to your surroundings**

Encourage your employees to stay aware of their surroundings while working from home. If possible, an employee’s work area should be in a room with a closed door to avoid distractions. Employees should set aside time each week to check their work area. Best practices include:

- Have a fire extinguisher and fire exit plan for the household
- Prevent electrical hazards by keeping desks clear of open liquid containers, like coffee or tea
- Dispose of trash at the end of each day

5. **Keep lines of communication open**

Stay connected with your workforce while employees are working remotely. Decide what communication channels are the most valuable and use them to stay in touch. Conference calls can help bring teams together. One-on-one calls with individual employees can reveal struggles they might be having in their new workspace.

FINAL WORD

Be aware of the connection between the choices you make at home and how they affect work. We no longer only represent ourselves in this day of age of technology. We represent everything we are a part of in our professional and personal lives and they are all interconnected.