Close Calls Are Warnings

WHAT’S AT STAKE

We can come up with lots of excuses for ignoring close calls. You’ve probably heard some of these:

- *“I don’t have time to deal with it.”*
- *“I don’t know how to report it or whom to report it to.”*
- *“The next person will notice the problem and report it.”*

A close call or near miss is an incident that could have resulted in an injury or death, but didn’t. Close calls are red flag warnings about unsafe conditions, actions or equipment. You should take action to correct the situation and report all close calls, no matter how minor they may seem.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Ignoring close calls can lead to serious results, including injuries and fatalities. A mild shock for one person could prove to be fatal for the next. If you?ve just jumped out of the way because some poorly stacked materials have fallen, the next person to come along could be crushed. A worker is nearly hit by a forklift because visibility is obscured at a pedestrian crossing. The next person could be run over.

EXAMPLE

It’s a chilly winter day. You’re walking quickly across the loading dock at your plant. Suddenly your foot goes out from under you as you slip on a patch of ice. You avoid falling to the concrete deck, but continue on your way without giving it another thought. Minutes later, a co-worker carrying an armload of materials slips and falls on that same patch of ice. The result is a cracked elbow, a lot of pain and a month away from work.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Check work areas and equipment daily.
- Take steps to evaluate your work practices. Are you following all safety procedures? Are you cutting corners to save time? Are you turning a blind eye to fellow workers? unsafe practices?
- Barricade any slip and fall hazards on floors immediately.
- Tag any damaged or broken machinery or equipment.
- Familiarize yourself with your company’s close call reporting system.
- Report any unsafe acts, improperly used equipment and work conditions.
- Report and follow up on any close calls to make sure that a hazard is identified and corrected.

FINAL WORD

A close call should not be considered a negative or inconvenient event. It is an important opportunity to discover a hazard and correct it without anyone being injured. Prevent injuries and fatalities by reporting all close calls and near misses. Be sure to make a report to ensure that corrective action has been taken to remedy the situation.