Horseplay on the Job Meeting Kit

Horseplay is rough or boisterous play or pranks that occur at the workplace. Horseplay can be activities such as joking that includes physical contact, playing around, racing, grabbing, foolish vehicle operation, and social pressure to participate in unsafe acts, harassment, and unauthorized contest. There is probably at least one on every job – the practical joker – the smart aleck who likes to make a bid for laughs and attention by playing jokes on fellow workers.

Horseplay that results in injury can result in criminal prosecution. Courts have held that these injuries are not the result of an accident but are deliberate may acts. Workplace horseplay incidents may lead to serious injuries at work, divide the workplace and prevent employees from getting their jobs done. Making horseplay a part of your workday may jeopardize your health and the future of your business. It's management's responsibility to ensure all employees have access to a safe, respectful and harassment free place to work.

HOW HORSEPLAY AFFECTS THE WORKPLACE

When practical jokes are common in the workplace, it's hard to pay attention to your job because you're always on the lookout for the next joke. Horseplay is a safety hazard that can quickly get out of hand and lead to injury or death. If someone else gets hurt as a result of your horseplay or joke, you may be liable for damages and you'll risk losing your job. Even if a practical joke isn't dangerous in itself, it can result in humiliation, embarrassment, anger, hurt feelings, distrust and even a desire for revenge.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

- Do not engage or participate in any type of unsafe behavior or acts.

- Follow all regulations and work rules to ensure the safety of individuals or other employees.
- Ensure protective equipment is used properly and operating machinery is in good repair and does not present a hazard to employees.
- When you’re fooling around, you’re not concentrating on your work.
- Directing your horseplay at others is even more dangerous. They’re not expecting the distraction and could easily have an accident such as falling into a moving machine part, slipping on the floor, or dropping a tool.
- Giving less than full concentration and attention to safety procedures makes you less likely to notice or account for hazards until it may be too late.
- Most accidents are caused by unsafe acts—and horseplay itself is an unsafe act.

WORKPLACE HORSEPLAY CREATES UNNECESSARY RISKS AND DANGERS

You can prevent most workplace accidents by being alert to hazards and following safety rules. You can’t do either when you indulge in horseplay.

- Running, chasing, or pushing can cause slips, trips, falls, and other accidents. You may:
- Not notice spills or items lying on the floor.
- Crash into, or push someone else into, heavy equipment or moving parts.
- Knock boxes or materials onto a person.
- Knock over open containers of hazardous substances.
- Throwing tools is a frequent cause of injuries. They may:
- Stab someone with a sharp edge.
- Hit someone in the head, eye, foot, etc., and cause an injury.
- Fall from a height and hit a person below with tremendous impact.
- Fooling around with PPE can damage it and expose you or

another worker to a hazardous substance.
- Speeding or stunt driving with a forklift can cause it to tip over or hit people or objects, possibly injuring the driver or pedestrians.
- Climbing on or under forklift forks or moving crane parts can cause you to get crushed or pushed.
- Running with a hand truck could spill the load on someone or run over feet.
- Pushing, teasing, or otherwise distracting people working with machinery could cause pinch point or other injuries.
- Practical jokes like “hiding” someone’s PPE, dropping your half of a load, turning out lights, etc., are not funny—they’re dangerous.

Take Your Job, Your Responsibilities, and Safety Seriously

- You’re responsible for performing your job correctly, which includes safely.
- Safety rules and procedures are designed to protect you.
- Everyone must follow safety rules.
- Failure to follow the rules is dangerous—for you and for others.
- Horseplay and other safety rule violations can lead to disciplinary action.
- Don’t indulge in horseplay or accuse those who won’t go along of having “no sense of humor.”
- Think how bad you would feel if your horseplay injured or sickened someone else—maybe seriously.
- Don’t allow other people to engage you in horseplay.

FINAL WORD

It should be clear to employees that they’re to refrain from engaging in unsafe behaviors on the job, follow all workplace rules and regulations, and ensure equipment is used properly. Supervisors and managers have a responsibility to keep their employees’ work environment safe and free of harassment by monitoring for and preventing horseplay.