Learn from Close Calls Safety Talk

What’s at Stake

Have you had a close call at work? Maybe you slipped on a greasy step but caught yourself before you bounced to the bottom of the stairs. Or you just missed touching an overhead power line with a pipe you were moving. What did you do next – just continue on your way? Or did you stop to examine how the injury almost happened and how a future injury could be prevented?

What’s the Danger

Minor incidents lead to major accidents if not reported and the hazard not removed. Unsafe working conditions, unsafe employee work habits, improper use of equipment or use of dangerous equipment can all lead to injuries or death in the workplace.

Example

A co-worker is using a ladder. It seems fine, but as he comes down, one of the rungs sags as he steps on it. He notices a crack. He puts the ladder back without tagging it as needing repairs. The next day you grab the same ladder. As you start to climb you put your foot through the rung, lose balance and fall, spraining your ankle.

How to Protect Yourself

Set example
Act the way you would like co-workers to act.

Protect others
After a close call, stop and examine how the accident almost happened and how a future accident could be prevented.

Tag hazard
Clean up, repair or report the hazard. Tag a defective tool. If you slipped on grease, barricade the spot before someone else steps in it. If possible, find out where it’s coming from and how to stop it in future.

Take care
Resolve to use safety aids such as stair handrails. Consult your supervisor after near misses such as the power line incident, you should work with your supervisor and safety department. The team can make sure such hazards are anticipated and avoided through use of safe procedures.

Report
The first step in this consultation process is the close call report. It’s a serious mistake to decide it’s silly to report a minor electrical shock from a tool. Your company has good reasons to have a policy requiring reporting of unsafe equipment and close calls. The next incident involving the tool or the metal item falling from a shelf could be more serious.

Final Word

Treat any close call seriously. You might save someone’s life by preventing a serious accident.