# Lucky Escapes

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Close calls are also known as near misses. They are situations in which a worker has a narrow escape from getting hurt. The worker probably feels lucky about getting away uninjured. If we pay attention, these incidents can be lucky in another way: they provide a preview of an injury that could happen. Thanks to this preview, measures can be taken now to prevent such injuries.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER

For every reported first aid or minor injury, there are on average hundreds of close call incidents that have gone unreported. Ignoring a close call means you could be paving the way for a serious injury to happen.

**EXAMPLE**

Jenna, a carpenter's assistant, picked up a power drill and received a slight electric shock. She dropped the tool, suffering no injury. At this point she had an important choice to make. If she just forgot the incident, the next person to pick up the tool may have damp hands or may be standing in a puddle of water. That person would be bound to get a severe shock. She reported the incident, so the tool was removed from service and checked over. That allowed it to be either repaired by qualified personnel or discarded, and provided a chance to find out why this tool became defective. Was it poorly designed or manufactured? Has the insulation gotten wet or is the cord frayed? How can problems be avoided in the future – perhaps by buying better tools, taking good care of them and inspecting them regularly? Questions were answered because Jenna made the right choice.

# HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Never ignore a close call. Don’t shrug off, don’t just laugh it off, and don’t shake in silence without telling anyone at work.
- Report all close calls so they can be investigated and the hazard removed before someone does get hurt.
- Be aware of near misses off the job; this habit can help prevent accidents. If you have a close call driving in traffic, take the time to review what happened, and why and how you could avoid such problems in the future.
- If you slip while you are walking, check to see why it happened. A review of the incident might prevent broken bones from a fall in the future. You could be protecting someone else ? or your own bones.

# FINAL WORD

If you have a near miss, consider yourself lucky on two counts: You didn’t get hurt, and you have the chance to prevent a future accident for yourself or someone else.