No Shortcut to Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Everyone takes a shortcut at one time or another. You cross the street between intersections instead of using the crosswalk or jump a fence instead of using the gate. But in many cases, a shortcut can involve danger.

Don’t improvise to save time. Ladders, steps, and walkways are built to ensure your safety, as well as for your convenience. Use them. Don’t go from one elevation to another by climbing a column or sliding down a rope.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

SHORTCUTS: FASTER AND BETTER OR HASTY AND DANGEROUS?

Shortcuts are amazing; why wouldn’t we take advantage of one that’s available? It’s almost instinctive and expected today that we want things to be easier, faster, and better. But shortcuts don’t guarantee success. Quite the reverse in fact. When we take shortcuts, we tend to get careless and place more emphasis on efficiency than on quality. Is it worth the risk to take a shortcut when applying food safety practices?

Shortcuts are generally derived from indolence in an attempt to perform a job with the most minimal effort required. This creates the opportunity for negative results and possibly severe consequences.

A successful shortcut—meaning one that results in no damage—nevertheless has a downside. It gives us the feeling that we can always substitute the quick way for the tried-and-true safe

way and get out of it in one piece. Unfortunately, that feeling can be misleading.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

INDIVIDUALS MAKE THE CHOICE

The decision to take a shortcut can be influenced by many different factors. That being said, at the end of the day shortcuts are a choice made by an individual. It is important to realize this fact and take steps to avoid taking shortcuts especially when it comes to safety on the job.

ELIMINATE WORKPLACE SAFETY SHORTCUTS

1. Lifting Quickly. Everyone knows that when lifting something really heavy, you should use a back brace, lift with your legs and even get other people to help share the load. When people are lifting lighter things, however, they often ignore these simple workplace safety tips. Instead, they just grab the item and go on their way.

2. Skipping Breaks. There are always times when there is just so much work that needs to be done that people can be tempted to skip over their lunches or breaks.

By letting your mind and body recover for even just a few minutes at a time, you will be able to work more safely. Taking a lunch is even more important, as it will help you to regulate blood sugar so you can work more safely for the rest of the day.

3. Using Tools Improperly. Each tool has a specific purpose and job, which it will perform properly. In some cases, however, people will be tempted to take a workplace safety shortcut by using a tool they have with them, rather than taking the time to go get the proper one.

4. Applying the Wrong Safety Label Stock. Using safety labels is one of the best ways to convey information throughout the

facility. This is why it is recommended that you have an industrial label maker right on site. When making labels, however, you need to make sure you are using the proper type of label stock at all times, based on where the label will be placed.

5. Ignoring 'Near Misses'. It can be tempting to ignore these events, since they didn't cause a disruption of work. The fact is, however, that you should always investigate them completely to ensure they don't happen again. Remember, today's 'near miss's is tomorrow's accident if it is not prevented.

6. Insufficient Emergency Equipment. As someone responsible for the safety of the facility, you should identify areas where there are specific risks, and make sure the proper emergency equipment is located nearby. Complying with just the minimums is a popular workplace safety shortcut, which can lead to major problems.

7. Neglecting Cleaning Tasks. Most facilities will have a team of people who are responsible for the day-to-day cleaning of the facility. There are often many areas of the facility that need to be properly cleaned beyond just sweeping up messes or cleaning up spills. Dust, dirt, grease and other things can build up on them, making them very difficult to read. Since they aren't on the floor, cleaning them is often neglected for months at a time, which can cause significant risks.

8. No Clear Emergency Exit Path. To help ensure everyone knows exactly where they should go, no matter where they are in the facility, it can be a good idea to add some sort of floor markings that always point people toward the nearest exit. Reflective floor tape, for example, is an affordable, easy to install option that can be used in almost any environment.

9. Only Initial Training. It is essential to provide high quality safety training to all employees when they are hired on, and then continue to give updates to this training on a regular basis. Simple refresher classes or courses can help keep everyone focused on training as long as they work in the facility.

10. Inadequate Maintenance. Keeping the machinery in your facility

up to date and well maintained is absolutely essential to the safety of the entire company. Putting off maintenance on a machine until something is broken or causing problems might seem like it will save time and money at first, but in reality, it will do neither.

AVOIDING SAFETY SHORTCUTS – DO IT PROPERLY THE FIRST TIME

It is always much better to do something properly the first time than to have to either redo it again later or deal with the consequences of the shortcut down the road.

- Hold yourself to a higher standard. Do not take the easy way out. Take the time and energy to perform tasks correctly. Make it a habit to follow safety policies and procedures.
- Help set the expectation that shortcuts are unacceptable when it comes to safety. If coworkers see you taking shortcuts, they are more likely to do so themselves.
- Realize that shortcuts affect more than just you. They can result in negative impacts on production, property damage, as well as injuries.
- If facing a perceived time pressure, evaluate whether it is a self-imposed time pressure. Many times, individuals put pressure on themselves to perform a task faster when there is no real outside pressure to get a work task completed.
- Preplan work tasks well ahead of time so the necessary tools, training, personnel, safety equipment, time, etc. are available. Having all the necessary items for work tasks can help to avoid the urge to take shortcuts.

FINAL WORD

Trying to pound a nail into wood with the back end of a screwdriver is an extreme simple example of a shortcut but there are many other similar workplace safety shortcuts used by workers that need to be discontinued.