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One Safeguard Does Not Make it Safe

A lot of time and effort is spent every single day to keep workplaces incident-free and employees healthy. There are many different challenges to address to be able to achieve this.

Many different things could go wrong during a work task or throughout the day that can result in injury to employees. Because of this fact, it is important to realize that achieving a safe workplace is a combination of many different efforts and not just any single action or safeguard.

Some individuals have the "good enough" mindset when it comes to implementing safeguards during their work tasks. When these individuals set up for their work tasks and carry them out, they do the bare minimum or just above the minimum.

For example, they may have the mindset that as long as they are wearing their PPE, that is good enough for the task at hand. In reality, there may be three or four more safeguards that need to be put in place to be sure that the task will be performed safely.

Safety is a Combination of Many Actions:

Having the "good enough" mindset will leave workers open to the risk of the hazards involved in the task.

If the workers take the time to implement the necessary safeguards facing these risks does not have to be the case. There are multiple safeguards for any single hazard in the case that one safeguard fails.

To demonstrate this point, we will look at a scenario involving work on a scaffold. The hazard we will discuss is dropped objects from the scaffold down to the lower level.

There are many safeguards to address the hazard of dropped objects, and the more that are in place, the less likely an injury occurs due to exposure to that hazard.

A few different safeguards of the many possibilities that should be implemented in our example:

- Eliminate as many objects, tools, and equipment as possible from the scaffold work platform.

- Make sure proper toe boards and guardrails are installed around the work platform.

- Tie off tools or use a container to place tools in while working on the scaffolding.

- Eliminate foot traffic below the work area.

- Place signs or barricades to prevent people from walking below the scaffolding into the line of fire of a dropped object.

- Place proper netting or roof above the area below to catch any objects that fall from the work area above.

If an individual only uses one or two of the mentioned safeguards to mitigate the hazard of dropped objects, then there is more of a chance that objects could be dropped and strike a person below.

Summary:

Think about how many safeguards are available for a single hazard, like in the example scenario discussed. Look at what you are currently doing to mitigate the hazards of your work tasks.

Are you only implementing one safeguard for a complex or serious hazard?

What other actions can you take to lessen the risk of injury for you and those around you?