

You've probably heard the expression, "Little things can make a big difference." This is true in many facets of life, whether interpersonal relationships, financial affairs, or safety issues.

Perhaps we should adapt the expression to say, "In safety, even little things can make a big difference." After all the training we have had, we are probably all conditioned to look out for big hazards. But often, it's the small items that can, quite literally, trip us up.

A company recently became alarmed when the accident statistics revealed a large increase during the previous year. After a safety briefing, supervisors began to review all the high-danger areas.

They were baffled at first when everything appeared fine. But when the investigation turned to the small items – the floors, stairs, extension cords, and portable tools – they discovered that the injuries from all these small areas had a huge impact on the overall injury record.

Many disabling injuries are a result of unsafe everyday situations. The sheer monotony and sameness of daily operation, if allowed, can result in inattentiveness and complacency. Small safety violations are overlooked and hazardous situations are allowed to develop.

Violations such as failure to follow established protocols, taking shortcuts, and circumventing safety measures because "it will only take a minute" result in accidents, lost time, and lost lives.



LITTLE THINGS COUNT

All of us have seen and overlooked dangers such as improperly stored tools, warped flooring, unstable ladders, or machinery not locked out. We allow the hazards to continue because it is more convenient, faster, or seemingly easier for us. Rather than continue to allow a dangerous situation, report it to your supervisor or resolve it yourself.

Here are a few tried and true methods of accident prevention. First, get rid of the hazard. Eliminate it from machinery, improper procedures, unsafe tools or conditions, or whatever else is protecting the hazard.

Second, wear approved protective gear to insulate yourself from danger. Third, relentlessly train personnel in job safety procedures so that they are empowered to make safe choices.

Knowledge often makes the difference in safety. If a worker understands the consequences of an unsafe situation, he is more likely to help eliminate it or avoid it.

Learning the reasons behind the rules allows workers to apply their training more effectively both at work and on the job. They will soon recognize how to acquire the discipline necessary to be vigilant of hazards. So remember, eliminating the little hazards makes a big difference in disabling injuries.

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