

## **Top Three Myths about Workplace Injuries -And What YOU can do to Bust Them**

**By Carl Potter, CSP, CMC and Deb Potter, PhD, CMC**

How many times have you heard people saying something completely ridiculous or that you know just isn't right? You don't have to go very far these days to encounter such statements. With everyone having their say on blogs, YouTube, and even the nightly news, you probably hear things several times a day that you just don't agree with or that you know are fabricated. Safety is not immune. We've been hearing "myths" about safety for years. We took an informal poll recently, and here are our top three safety myths – you've probably heard them or something similar a time or two in your career.

### **Myth #3 You cannot create a hazard-free workplace**

It is shocking how many people believe that no workplace can be made free of hazards. We had one person tell us that it just isn't possible to have a workplace without hazards so he might as well lock the front door to the manufacturing plant where he was the safety director. Certainly situations change over time, sometimes even very quickly, making it difficult to identify and control hazards. It requires discipline and diligence to recognize and mitigate every hazard.

**"We don't work in a dangerous environment. We work in a hazardous environment that we make dangerous by not following safe work procedures and wearing our PPE."** -Brad Miles

When we understand what it takes to create an injury-free workplace, we are able to hit the target more than not. Hazards are the reason people get hurt, without the hazard there is no injury. When we fail to follow safety procedures and or wear our personal protective equipment we increase the risk of an injury. A hazard-free workplace is created by actively identifying, evaluating the risk and applying controls to physically protect employees.

### **Myth #2 Being safe takes too much time and money**

When people say that it takes too much time or money to be safe, they obviously don't understand the power of a cost/benefit analysis. Have you ever considered the direct and indirect cost of even a minor injury? And, the thought of pain and agony that an injury causes should be enough to make anyone do everything they can to stay safe.

**"I think of attitude as an inward feeling expressed by outward behavior."** -John Maxwell

If you feel that being safe takes too much time and money, you have an attitude problem. In our work we continually meet individuals who have been injured and by their own admission, the cost of recover and lost wages is substantial. A personal injury impacts the productivity of the company, the earning power of the individual who is injured and takes valuable quality time away from families.

### **Myth #1 Accidents just happen**

Research shows that over 99% of all accidents are preventable. If you think that accidents just happen, then what allows you to drive down the road, walk down the sidewalk, or even live in your home without great fear? The reality is that you have a great deal of control over the circumstances around you.

**"Fate is the hunter for those least prepared."** -Ernest K. Gann

In the high-risk environment of electric utilities it is vital that workers understand the importance knowing how to prevent personal injuries. Any utility worker who thinks that working safe is a matter of fate is a danger to themselves and co-workers. Fate is the hunter, but the worker who prepares by learning everything they can about working safe is less likely to be injured. When conducting a job briefing the fates are dismissed by taking time to identify any hazards. When the worker believes that they have no control they are likely to miss a hazard and in turn miss preparing themselves to hit the goal of nobody gets hurt.

**"Remember, people will judge you by your actions and not your intentions." -Carl Potter**

Safety is an action word, but most of the time we treat it as something passive. Be safe, have a safe trip or make safety your first concern. To make something safe takes action and requires one to do something. That something is to recognize what can cause an injury (hazard) and then take steps to control it in a manner that ensures nobody gets hurt. Many leaders think that leading people to work safe means showing support by flipping burgers at the annual safety meeting. This is great to help show servant leadership, but that is not what people in the field want to have happen. They want leadership!

A leader is one who knows how to rally the people behind a cause and is willing to walk the talk. Employees want a leader who will challenge them to continually be better at working safe. A leader who says, "I don't want you to get hurt producing, transmitting or distributing our product and I am willing to work with you to make sure that happens." Creating a workplace that targets zero-injuries is not a gimmick or a new safety program – it is a workplace where everyone cares enough to engage in the safety process. To create such a workplace the organizations need leadership and leadership is at all levels. Will you take action to engage and challenge the people you work with or are you just talking about safety?

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*Carl Potter, Certified Safety Professional and Deb Potter, PhD are Certified Management Consultants who work with organizations that want to create an environment where nobody gets hurt. As advocates of a zero-injury workplace, they are speakers, authors, and consultants to industry. As a general aviation pilot, Carl enjoys infusing aviation safety principles into his workplace programs. For information about the Hazard Recognition and Control Workshop, contact them at 800-259-6209 or [www.HazardRecognitionWorkshop.com](http://www.HazardRecognitionWorkshop.com).*