

New Job? What are the Odds for Injury?

Week Number 18 (April 30—May 6) 2017 Edition

Summary

Employees who are new to a jobsite, regardless of how much industry experience they have, are at a significantly higher risk for injury than others. They should not be afraid to ask questions of other employees as they become acclimated to the job and the way that things are done on it, and veteran employees need to help them through that process.

For Discussion

How many companies have you worked for in your career? How many different projects have you worked on? How many times have you changed occupations?

Every time you have made one of these changes you have faced a higher probability of being injured on the job. Studies show that up to 25% of injuries in heavy industry occur within an employee's first 30 days of starting new work. In addition, 40% percent of employees injured at work in the U.S. have been on the job for less than a year.

Even if you have years of experience, your odds of injury are higher when you are new. New hires aren't always green, inexperienced workers. New hires are new to a particular jobsite, their coworkers, and the overall work environment. It takes time to get accustomed to a new job.

Think about this: How did you learn your trade and the methods that make you a valuable asset to the company? You probably had formal training, but a lot more **on-the-job training**. You learned your job from practice and from those already experienced in the trade. Now, as you work beside n

new people, it is your experience that must be passed on.

Remember, it doesn't matter whether a person is a 25-year veteran in the field or a new apprentice – either can be new to the job, the crew, or the industry, and would probably appreciate help getting to know his new environment.

Take the time to describe the layout of the project, the best method to access work, or how to use an uncommon tool. Remember to point out work hazards and how to avoid them. Also, don't assume that a new hire knows more than he does. When you show someone else the safest and smartest way to do a job, it keeps you safe as well. If you are new to a workplace, don't be afraid to ask questions.

Over 90% of all injuries are caused by an unsafe act; that is, someone doing things the wrong way. How many of these injuries do you think happened because the worker just didn't know the safest or smartest way to get it done, or didn't ask for fear of being ridiculed?

Everyone plays the odds for injury in his career. Reduce your chances of becoming a statistic by asking questions if you're on a new job. Help someone else avoid being a statistic by teaching him the tricks-of-the-trade you've learned from experience.

Questions

1. What kinds of potential safety hazards on your jobsite would you alert a new hire to?
2. Did you ever have an especially good or especially bad experience when you were new? What made it good or bad?