

Tool Box Talk

They're Not Really Accidents

Ac-ci-dent - 1. An unexpected and undesirable event. This is the first definition in Webster's dictionary. All of the other definitions of the word accident are essentially the same. Accidents on the job cause all too many painful injuries and claim far too many lives. **But most accidents are really not accidents.** A better word would be incident because most accidents at work, while undesirable, should not be unexpected. They shouldn't be unexpected because more than 80% of all accidents (or incidents) at work are caused by unsafe acts or unsafe conditions - both of which can be controlled.

As a worker you control the first cause, **Unsafe Acts**. For example: A worker uses equipment that is defective or damaged, or uses good equipment in a careless or other unsafe manner. Other examples of unsafe acts include disregarding posted warning signs, failure to wear a hard hat, smoking near flammables or explosives, working too close to power lines, handling chemicals or other hazardous materials improperly, putting your body or any part of it onto the unsafe access of a machine, or lifting material incorrectly.

The cause is **Unsafe Conditions**. Examples include insufficient illumination, poor ventilation, and broken or damaged tools, which can lead to an accident. Missing ground plugs on cords, containers that are not labeled, careless disposal of waste or excess material -- these are just a few of many possible unsafe conditions. Unsafe conditions that you can correct, such as turning in damaged equipment for repair or replacement, should be done so immediately. Additionally, unsafe conditions can also be turned in as **Action Items** to your EPP trainers.

You can make a difference by taking the time to perform your work safely and reporting any unsafe condition you discover to your supervisor immediately. You'll find that practicing workplace safety procedures will go a long way in preventing accidents from occurring.