THERE’S NO EXCUSE FOR UNSAFE ACTS

Leader’s Guide

© 2008 ERI Safety Videos
THERE’S NO EXCUSE FOR UNSAFE ACTS

This easy-to-use Leader’s Guide is provided to assist in conducting a successful presentation. Featured are:

INTRODUCTION: A brief description of the program and the subject that it addresses.

PROGRAM OUTLINE: Summarizes the program content. If the program outline is discussed before the video is presented, the entire program will be more meaningful and successful.

PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION: These sections will help you set up the training environment, help you relate the program to site-specific incidents, and provide program objectives for focusing your presentation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Questions may be copied and given to participants to stimulate discussion about the program, its safety lessons and universal theme.

INTRODUCTION
Unsafe acts always have the potential to cause injury or death no matter the excuse or justification used to commit them. That’s the theme of this fast-paced program that stresses to viewers that they must put safety first in every job they perform by wearing proper protective equipment, following safe work practices, using the correct tool for the job and asking for assistance when unsure how to proceed safely. The video also underscores the point that injuries that result from making excuses to commit unsafe acts aren’t accidents; they are the consequences of our purposely placing ourselves in harm’s way.

PROGRAM OUTLINE
BACKGROUND
• A maintenance worker decides not to fully verify a lockout/tagout procedure and is seriously burned when a valve opens unexpectedly.

• A pipefitter chooses to connect his fall protection to a piece of conduit rather than a proper anchor point and falls to his death.

• A construction worker opts to enter an unsloped and unprotected trench in order to inspect a pipe and is buried alive.

• Each of these incidents shares a common thread. In each case, a worker chose to commit an unsafe action which resulted in serious injury or death.

• Each worker no doubt had some type of excuse for his behavior, but the result of his decision makes it clear that there is no excuse for unsafe acts.

EXCUSES MADE BY ADULTS ARE NO MORE JUSTIFIED THAN THOSE CHILDREN MAKE
• A boy climbs high in a tree and his mom is very concerned. Should she be relieved when he assures her that he won’t fall? After all, he “does this all the time.”

• No, she isn’t relieved because she knows that his excuse does nothing to change the fact that he may fall at any time. When adults use similar excuses to justify unsafe actions, are they any different than the boy in the tree? No.

• When adults commit unsafe actions such as failing to wear protective equipment or ignoring safe work procedures, they do so under the same false belief as the boy in the tree.

• Their excuses, however, can no more stop a machine or a falling object than the boy’s excuse can turn off gravity.

• Unsafe acts always have the potential to cause injury or death no matter the excuse or justification used to commit them.
Seatbelts, protective helmets and fall protection are all examples of necessary safety equipment frequently ignored by workers and justified by some type of excuse: “I don’t need fall protection. I do this all the time; I’m not going to fall” or “I don’t need a seatbelt; I’ve never had an accident.”

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PUTTING OURSELVES IN HARM’S WAY ARE NOT ACCIDENTS
- Remember, excuses cannot make an unsafe action any safer. Using excuses to justify unsafe actions is simply a mental mechanism used to escape the reality that we are purposely placing ourselves in harm’s way.

- Some may protest the assertion that an action resulting in injury was committed on purpose, choosing instead to call it an “accident.”

- There are few true accidents; most injuries result when a choice is made to commit an unsafe act.

- For example, a person chooses to play Russian roulette by placing a bullet into a gun, spinning the cylinder, placing the gun to his head and pulling the trigger. If the gun fired and the person was killed, would that be called an accident? Of course not.

- So when a worker chooses to wear loose clothing near moving equipment, decides to operate a forklift in an unsafe manner or performs electrical work without wearing the proper flame-resistant clothing, is it an accident if they are injured or killed? No, not really.

JUSTIFYING UNSAFE ACTS WHEN WE SUCCESSFULLY AVOID INJURY DEFIES ALL LOGIC
- Why do people place themselves in danger? Perhaps it’s due to human nature; as humans, we are easily swayed by simple reinforcement and success even it goes against all logic.

- In the example of Russian roulette, logic tells us that surviving the first pull of the trigger does not improve our chances of surviving a second attempt; yet, when we get away with an unsafe action at work, our action is reinforced by our supposed success.

- Even though logic tells us that repeating the unsafe act is just as likely to cause injury, all too often that is exactly what we do.

PUTTING SAFETY FIRST IN EVERY JOB WE PERFORM
- How do we avoid committing unsafe acts? We start by putting safety first in every act we perform.

- We must adjust our attitude to recognize that finishing a job as fast as possible or as easily as possible is not our goal; our goal must be to finish a job while staying as safe as possible.

- To achieve this, we must think before we start any task, taking into account any safety issues. We must fully understand what we are doing and how we intend to stay safe while doing it.

- This means wearing proper safety equipment, following safe work practices, using the correct tools for the job and asking for assistance when unsure how to proceed safely.

- We also need help—co-workers and supervisors must be willing to consistently speak out against unsafe acts while also providing positive feedback to those choosing to follow safe work practices.

- We must be willing to recognize and reject the excuses used to justify unsafe actions, using them as an internal trigger to reevaluate the safety of what we are doing or as an opportunity to prevent a co-worker from making a similar mistake.
**PREPARE FOR THE SAFETY MEETING**

Review each section of this Leader's Guide as well as the videotape. Here are a few suggestions for using the program:

Make everyone aware of the importance the company places on health and safety and how each person must be an active member of the safety team.

Introduce the videotape program. Play the videotape without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Copy the review questions included in this Leader's Guide and ask each participant to complete them.

Copy the attendance record as needed and have each participant sign the form. Maintain the attendance record and each participant's test paper as written documentation of the training performed.

**Here are some suggestions for preparing your Videotape equipment and the room or area you use:**

Check the room or area for quietness, adequate ventilation and temperature, lighting and unobstructed access.

Check the seating arrangement and the audiovisual equipment to ensure that all participants will be able to see and hear the videotape program.

**CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION**

Begin the meeting by welcoming the participants. Introduce yourself and give each person the opportunity to become acquainted if there are new people joining the training session.

Explain that the primary purpose of this program is to illustrate how unsafe acts always have the potential to cause injury or death no matter what excuses are used to commit them as well as to stress that we must put safety first in every act we perform.

Introduce the videotape program. Play the videotape without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline. Copy the discussion questions included in this Leader's Guide and allow the participants to review them and then conduct a discussion about the program.

After watching the videotape program, the viewer will be able to explain the following:

- How excuses made by adults about safety aren’t any different from the excuses our children make when we insist they be protected from injury;
- Why the consequences of putting ourselves in harm’s way aren’t really accidents;
- Why we must not fall victim to repeating the same unsafe acts just because we’ve been successful from being injured;
- Why we must put safety first in every job we perform.
THERE’S NO EXCUSE FOR UNSAFE ACTS

Discussion Questions

1. What are some common excuses employees make at this facility in order to get a job done more quickly or as easily as possible?

2. Have you ever made a childish excuse in order to justify committing an unsafe act? If so, describe the circumstances surrounding your actions and why you felt it was necessary at the time to make an excuse for your behavior.

3. Have you or a co-worker ever been injured or had a close call due to an unsafe act and referred to the situation as an accident? If so, explain the circumstances surrounding the incident and whether you believe it really was an accident.

4. Have you ever used a phrase similar to “don’t worry, I do it all the time” to justify repeating an unsafe act? If so, what was the task you were performing that prompted your excuse and what could have been the consequences of your failure to follow procedure?

5. Have you ever had a conversation with a co-worker in which he or she made an excuse to justify working in an unsafe manner? If so, how did you respond?