

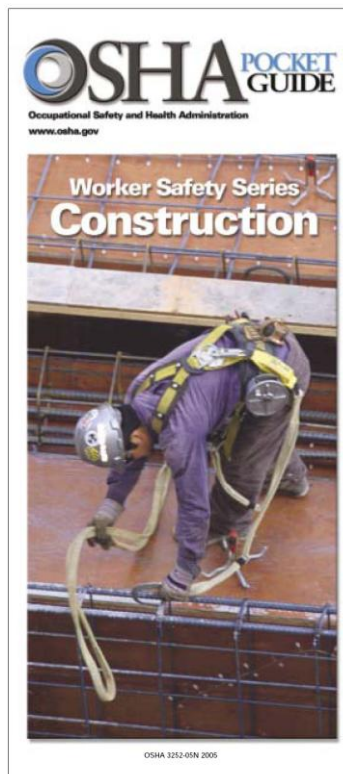
Safety is Good Business

A couple years ago I read a book that my son had purchased. The book *Why Things Break: Understanding the World by the Way It Comes Apart* by Mark E. Eberhart discusses the cause of fractures based on the molecular composition of the item and goes into a wide range of things that have fractured including the Titanic, airplanes, bridges, and even Corelle Ware. Now, I am not a science reader most of the time, but I did find this book fascinating.

One message out of the book will stick with me forever but had nothing to do with science. That message had to do with the changing expectations that we, the public, have of science and engineering to provide us with safety. We expect that a plane will not fall apart in flight or our vehicles will not burst into flame. A hundred years ago, families still mourned the loss of a loved one, but the demand for safety was not as strong.

On the other hand, I will frequently read articles or hear comments about how safety precaution has gone too far. Someone will

comment about how when they were a kid, they didn't have to wear a helmet to ride a bike or be strapped into a car seat to ride to Grandma's house. And they will usually end that comment with something like "and I survived." But the reality of that comment is that there were those who did not survive. Some family mourned the loss of a child from a vehicle accident or raised a paralyzed child who flew over the handle bars. We, the public, have screamed for protection from accidents.



These expectations are present in our daily lives whether we are sleeping, recreating or working. As a business owner or manager, you hold prime responsibility to meet these expectations both for your customers and your employees.

Because of these high expectations for safety, many agencies have been created and many laws have been enacted. The first agency that comes to mind for workplace safety is OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), but there are many other agencies also involved. We heard a lot about the Mine Safety and Health Administration during the Crandall Canyon mine disaster. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) governs safety concerning land, water and air. The EPA provides oversight to protect us from such elements as asbestos, mercury and acetone (nail polish remover).

Are these laws and regulations too much? Not really. As a business owner/manager, you should be interested in complying in every way possible for

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several reasons. The following is a quote from the OSHA website, Q & A's for Small Business Employers:

Safety is good business. An effective safety and health program can save \$4 to \$6 for every \$1 invested. It's the right thing to do, and doing it right pays off in lower costs, increased productivity, and higher employee morale.

How do these savings happen? Through lower worker's compensation insurance rates, lower health plan costs, less absenteeism, higher employee morale, less litigation and less fines and penalties by those regulating agencies.

Taking the risk of not providing a safe work environment is just like bragging about how you "survived" without wearing that bicycle helmet or riding in that car seat. Yes, most of your employees will survive. But what is the cost of one injury or death? What is the cost to you, your business and to the family of that employee?

As workers, we know that there is danger lurking out there. The Crandall Canyon

miners knew that they had dangerous jobs as does the trench worker, the power lineman, and the farm worker. I know that sitting at this computer right now has inherent risks. But our expectations are that science and engineering and you will provide us with safety. I do not want to bury my husband the way my Grandmother did. Make workplace safety a priority in your business.

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