

SMALL INJURIES CAN BE FATAL

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

When we think of fatal injuries we typically think of crushing events, falls, electrocutions and the like. How about a laceration? Yes those can be fatal also:

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A federal agency is investigating the death of a worker at a Savannah recycling plant, who died after a chain of events that begin with a cut to his hand. Authorities say the worker died Tuesday after a Sunday accident at Southern Metals Recycling's plant on Tremont Road. Michael Day, owner of the temporary staffing firm StaffCo, tells The Savannah Morning News that 26-year-old Fernando Aburto cut his hand while stripping insulation from wire at the plant. Day said the worker then fainted at the sight of the blood, hit his head on concrete and was taken to a hospital. Day said StaffCo provides workers for Southern Metals Recycling. The recycling company referred questions about the matter to StaffCo.

Although not an everyday occurrence, we must understand that these types of escalations are a real possibility. Even the slightest injury can escalate. Things like infection are perhaps the biggest potential complication that can occur from a cut. Although typically not fatal, failure to clean and dress even the most minor lacerations can lead to infections that may indeed become life threatening.

What if a "small" incident happens while building a scaffold? It may start small, but end in a fall. Or a line pin or twig isn't tied back and hits someone. Shouldn't be a big deal, right? But what if it's in the eye or neck? Many times seemingly small things change people's lives in a split second.

The key to this topic is to treat each and every injury as one that could escalate beyond the first look. If you are a first responder take all the precautions necessary to ensure that the injury isn't escalated.

SIGNS OF A STROKE

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STROKE IDENTIFICATION

During a BBQ, a friend stumbled and took a little fall - she assured everyone that she was fine (they offered to call paramedics) and that she had just tripped over a brick because of her new shoes. They got her cleaned up and got her a new plate of food. While she appeared a bit shaken up, she went about enjoying herself the rest of the evening. Her husband called later telling everyone that his wife had been taken to the hospital - at 6:00 PM, she passed away. She had suffered a stroke at the BBQ. Had they known how to identify the signs of a stroke, perhaps she would be with us today. Some don't die. They end up in a helpless, hopeless condition instead.

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within 3 hours he can totally reverse the effects of a stroke...totally. He said the trick was getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed, and then getting the patient medically cared for within 3 hours, which is tough.

RECOGNIZING A STROKE

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S: Ask the individual to **SMILE**.

T: Ask the person to **TALK**; to speak a simple sentence.

R: Ask him or her to **RAISE BOTH ARMS**.

Another 'sign' of a stroke is this: Ask the person to 'stick' out their tongue. If the tongue is 'crooked', if it goes to one side or the other, that is also an indication of a stroke. If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 911 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

MINOR INJURIES

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When we talk of someone being injured, we usually think of serious injuries, such as those involving broken bones or where a lot of blood is lost. We don't think much about the little incidents, such as scratches, splinters, dust in the eye, and blisters. These things don't give us much pain nor lay us up. And if properly treated, minor injuries shouldn't give us serious concern.

EVEN MINOR INJURIES CAN BECOME SERIES

When we neglect a minor injury, however, we could end up in the hospital or even six feet under. Do you think that I'm exaggerating? Consider what can happen if you let a minor cut on your arm go untreated. Germs can enter and cause infection. If the infection, in turn, isn't treated, it can cause blood poisoning, which can be fatal.

TWO KINDS OF INJURIES OFTEN NEGLECTED

A hard blow on the head can make you dizzy or unconscious for a few seconds. It's easy to overlook this injury because after-wards you may feel OK, except for a headache. What many of us don't realize is that a blow on the head can cause a slight concussion or fracture, which can't be detected except by a doctor. As a result we later may go to sleep and not wake up. So if you have a head injury, see a doctor for a checkup.

A blow to the stomach can occur when you run into something or are struck by something. The blow may knock you down and take the wind out of you, but a few minutes later you may feel OK. Just because there may be no visible injury, however, is no reason for not reporting to first aid. It doesn't take much of a blow to rupture an intestine or start internal bleeding. And these unseen injuries can kill you.

REPORT ALL INJURIES

The important thing to remember is to report all injuries, even though they are minor and no physical damage is apparent. Get proper first aid and see a doctor if necessary.

MEDICATION

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The typical "cold medications" are antihistamines or decongestants or a combination of both. Unfortunately, the side effects of these drugs can be dangerous depending on the use and dosage.

Many non-prescription drugs cause drowsiness, inattentiveness, or impair one's ability to concentrate or make decisions, drive a car, operate machinery, and can slow down your reflexes to some degree. If you really can't stay home when you are sick, and must take over-the-counter medications, keep these rules in mind.

Follow recommended dosages: Twice the dosage won't make you feel twice as good but will make you more drowsy and less able to concentrate. Contrary to popular belief, doubling the dose does not double the relief. Doubling the dosage markedly increases the potential side effects without making a big difference in the symptoms you are trying to alleviate. The dosage on the package is effective and should be followed.

Don't use combination medicines: If you need a decongestant, take a decongestant. If an antihistamine is needed, take one, but avoid multi-ingredient products. Don't mix over-the-counter medications or use along with prescription drugs: The side effects of mixing different medications can be severe and are often unpredictable. Individuals who are already on prescription medication should check with their doctor or pharmacist before mixing prescription and over-the-counter medications.

Read the label: Many over-the-counter medicines have warnings about such things as operating machinery, driving, and drinking alcohol when taking the medication. Believe the label warnings as they are there for one reason, your safety. Ignoring these warnings can make the effects of over-the-counter drugs even more pronounced, and potentially dangerous.

Find something that works and stick with it: Don't change remedies every few days. Side effects usually diminish after a week or so of use. Try new medications over the weekend, so if side effects do occur, they won't jeopardize your safety.

Don't underestimate the dangers that over-the-counter medications can cause to your safety. Consult your physician if you have questions or if adverse symptoms persist.

EMERGENCY! WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

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What would you do? That question should make you think. Your answer could mean the difference between life and death for a co-worker. Emergency, Rescue 911, Code Red, Squad 51, and for the old timers Rescue 8 are all TV shows that deal with real life emergencies.

Are you prepared for the unexpected? Do you know what to do? Do you know who to call for help? Are you qualified to help? If you answered "yes" to these questions - great! However, if you answered "no" then you need to pay special attention to today's safety meeting.

No matter what your position at the construction project, you need to know what to do in the event of an emergency. Your life and the lives of your co-workers could depend on your training and knowledge. If you are the first one on the scene, you need to protect yourself from any hazards. For example, precautions may need to be taken to deal with blood or other body fluids, gas leaks, and power lines. You don't want to become another victim. Stay cool, don't panic, and call for help. Contact 911, local emergency officials or a jobsite emergency response team. You are the main link between the emergency and the outside world.

Secure the area and keep co-workers and others out of the area unless they are trained to provide assistance. If you are qualified to give emergency care, protect yourself first. Make sure you wear your universal PPE (Personal Protective Equipment - gloves, goggles, and a one way mask.) Talk to the victim. Check your ABC'S: Airway, Breathing, and Circulation. If the victim is not breathing start CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation). If the person is bleeding apply direct pressure to the wound. Emergencies are unplanned events. They come unexpectedly and may involve you.

What will you do if an emergency occurs? Find out who to call and know where a telephone is. Learn the locations of fire extinguishers and first aid kits, and make sure you know how to use them. Learn and understand emergency procedures and evacuation routes for the jobsite. Be prepared for the unexpected. Do it now. Don't wait until after the emergency to learn what to do. Ask your supervisor if you have any questions.

You may need to help save a life tomorrow! Is your first aid training up to date? Check for classes in your area today!

