

why accidents  
happen —

and how to  
avoid them.



Accidents in the workplace happen. And manufacturing and logistics environments are especially susceptible to the kinds of miscues that can lead to serious damage. Many times, the difference between a minor injury and a life-threatening catastrophe can be slight, so you need to be vigilant to spot the warning signs.

To help you know what to look for, we've outlined some of the major reasons accidents occur — and how you can help your team avoid them.

## distraction

Distraction is one of the leading causes of workplace accidents today.<sup>1</sup> And while you can't expect employees to maintain focus all shift long, distractions like idle chit-chat and the use of smartphones can pull attention away from duties and create the kind of momentary lapses that cause accidents.

Establish your own set of workplace guidelines, and make sure your policy is clear to your staff on both conversation and the use of smartphones on the job. If the problem is severe enough, consider instituting either a full or partial smartphone ban or prohibiting the use of headphones while using them. If distracting conversation is the issue, try allocating specific talk-time for employees to decompress and catch up. A good rule of thumb is 10 minutes of chit-chat for every two hours of work.

## rushing

For manufacturing and logistics operations, time is critical — optimal levels of productivity and efficiency hinge on a strict schedule. And, while you understandably want to motivate workers to get the job done quickly, rushing can have negative consequences. Consider how the following could lead to injuries or accidents among your staff:

- Employees hurrying to complete a task may use the wrong tool in the interest of time.
- Haste often causes employees to act impulsively, rather than thinking rationally.
- Rushing to the job site can cause employees to drive aggressively — and dangerously.

There's even evidence to suggest that rushing can spread anxiety and resentment among co-workers, causing even more accidents.<sup>2</sup> To prevent this, remind your team that it's just as important to get the job done safely as it is to get it done fast. Consider the following tips to boost productivity without placing undue stress on your employees:

### set realistic expectations

Aggressive production schedules and tight deadlines put unnecessary pressure on your team, making them both less productive and more susceptible to accidents. Set realistic goals and communicate them clearly to boost the morale — and efficiency — of your staff.

### get organized

If you can reduce time wasted looking for materials and tools, you can boost productivity without compromising safety. Clear out space so that all mission-critical items have a designated spot near the workstation where they'll be used.

### upgrade machinery

While it may be costly upfront, upgrading machinery can have great long-term benefits. With faster, more efficient tools workers can get the job done safely without wasted downtime from older equipment breaking down.

<sup>1</sup> Rich, Mike. "Eliminating Deadly Distractions in the Workplace." SafetyServicesCompany.com <https://www.safetyservicescompany.com/industry-category/construction/eliminating-deadly-workplace-distractions/> (accessed July 30, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Shellenbarger, Sue. "How Busy Colleagues Spread Secondhand Stress." Wsj.com <https://www.wsj.com/articles/no-headline-available-1386352891> (accessed July 30, 2018).



## shortcuts

For employees pressed for time, shortcuts can often seem like a more efficient way of tackling daily duties. But safety protocols exist for a reason, and even one small deviation from standard operating procedure can quickly lead to disaster. Here are some common shortcuts that your team may be taking that should be avoided:

### lifting quickly and improperly

Instruct your staff to lift with their legs, not their backs. Otherwise, risk of injury goes through the roof. Remember: slow and steady wins the race. Be sure to share Randstad's helpful lifting-safety infographic with your team for other best practices.

### skipping breaks

When staff members are behind schedule, skipping breaks can seem like the only way to get work done on time. But doing so could result in things like heat stroke, dehydration and exhaustion. These will make your team more accident prone and reduce the quality of their work, so that the job winds up taking twice as long to complete. Make an effort to have water and snacks available onsite at all times to keep everyone healthy and humming along.

### inadequate maintenance

You can't be everywhere at once. Yet, keeping tabs on the state of your machinery and equipment is paramount to preventing accidents. Communicate to your staff that faulty maintenance impacts everyone and that monitoring equipment is everyone's responsibility. If any issues are found, instruct them to notify management directly. Once you get word of a problem, address it right away before an incident occurs.

<sup>3</sup> "There is No Shortcut to Safety." Selectinternational.com <http://www.selectinternational.com/safety-blog/bid/189940/there-is-no-shortcut-to-safety> (accessed July 30, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> "Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Requiring Days Away From Work, 2015." Bls.gov <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/osh2.nr0.htm> (accessed July 30, 2018).

## lack of training

As an employer, ensuring everyone on your team is adequately trained is one of the most direct ways you can have an impact on preventing accidents in your workplace. But it takes more than just a one-and-done onboarding session. Safety protocols are always changing, so make sure that the second you learn something new, you teach your team.

For long-tenured employees who haven't received training in some time, monitor performance to make sure they're still using equipment and carrying out all their day-to-day tasks properly. At least one insurance firm has found that on-the-job injuries are often linked to workers not knowing how to perform tasks correctly, so train adequately to make your workplace as safe as possible.<sup>3</sup>

## avoid overexertion and strain

Overexertion consistently ranks among the leading causes of occupational injuries or illnesses within manufacturing.<sup>4</sup> So instruct your employees to be on the lookout for strain of any kind, as it can be an indicator that danger is on the way.

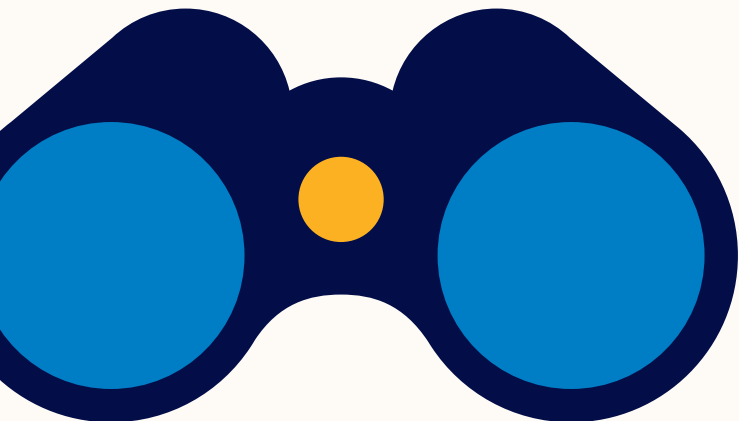
To help your employees avoid strain and overexertion, share the following tips:

- Only lift what you feel comfortable carrying.
- Don't volunteer for an assignment that has requirements beyond your physical capabilities.
- If you suffer from musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), like sprains or strains related to overexertion, make sure your supervisor and everyone on your team is aware of it, as it can increase the risk of accidents in certain situations.

## key takeaways

While keeping the workplace safe is everyone's responsibility, it's your role as an employer to inform and train your staff on the latest safety best practices. Keep these five danger areas in mind — and share them with your team — to identify and eliminate potential safety threats throughout all areas of operation.

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# stay-safe cheat sheet

## help prevent distraction

- Educate employees on the risks of working while distracted.
- Establish guidelines around smartphone and headphone usage.
- Provide opportunities for employees to catch up and chit-chat outside the warehouse.

## stop rushing

- Create a work environment that helps reduce the need for employees to rush.
- Set realistic production schedules and deadlines.
- Organize tools and materials in a way that helps employees work efficiently.
- Invest in upgrading tools and machinery to improve worker efficiency and output.

## don't take shortcuts

- Educate employees on the importance of not taking shortcuts.
- Teach employees about proper lifting techniques and best practices.
- Encourage employees to take advantage of breaks to hydrate and re-energize.
- Maintain tools and machinery to prevent potential injuries and production downtime.

## don't skimp on training

- Train employees how to properly use all tools and machinery.
- Educate employees on proper safety best practices relating to their daily tasks.
- Stay informed on safety best practices, as protocols may change.
- Schedule regular safety and equipment training sessions to help keep everyone safe.

## avoid overexertion and strain

- Educate employees on how to avoid overexertion and strain.
- Train employees on proper lifting techniques and best practices.
- Don't let them volunteer for an assignment that has requirements beyond their physical capabilities.
- Encourage your employees to report any issues, like strains or sprains, to their manager to help prevent more serious issues.