

BEWARE THE TIGER - Safety Tip of the Week - September 14, 2009

There is an essay online called "Beware the Tiger", which gives a somewhat amusing supposition that the first safety rule was probably just that - Beware the Tiger, or whatever beast lived close enough to the early humans to be a danger to them. (To read the full essay, follow this link: <http://www.webworldinc.com/wes-con/tiger.htm>) The essay ends with this truism, "The person who gains the most from following a safety rule is you."

In the last two safety tips, we examined two of the three controls that OSHA refers to, Engineering Controls and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The third control is Administrative controls, work rules and safety rules.

What are some safety rules for your work site? Are you required to wear gloves or protective shoes? Are you to stay 6 feet from a noisy machine? Are you required to wear a seat belt while operating a forklift? Whatever your site rules are, they are designed to protect you.

As we mentioned in previous safety tips, PPE is the weakest link of the safety controls. Engineering controls are more effective as they are not as dependent on us. PPE is only as effective as we allow it to be when we take care of it and wear it properly. A guard or rail is already designed to be effective to afford the protection we need.

Work rules are somewhere between the two. A rule is not engineered into a design, but is often common sense and something we realize we should do. We understand that we should be careful when around wild beasts who might cause us harm, like tigers, if those beasts are not in cages (an engineering control) or if we are not wearing very protective clothing (PPE) that prevents tiger teeth and claws from doing damage.

Whatever your tiger is, whether it is working at heights, operating forklifts, working with or around electricity and forms of energy, entering confined spaces, handling hazardous chemicals and materials, or any hazardous working condition, remember to Beware the Tiger - the person who gains the most from following a safety rule is YOU.

Safety is Contagious, Pass it on!

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