

Toolbox Talk

Horseplay on the Job

Having a positive attitude and bit of fun at work is important, all work and no play does create some tension after all. But there is a limit to how much “fun” should be had. The term Horseplay, meaning a rough boisterous play, has no place on the jobsite. Pulling pranks and attempting dangerous stunts on a construction site often lead to injury and property damages.

Injuries that happen at the workplace, even during break times, are recordable. That doesn’t mean you should record the video, that means it gets reported on OSHA logs and can carry insurance and workers comp claims.

Examples of Horseplay

Thanks to social media, we have an endless supply of people hurting themselves at work. Here are just a few common examples and the serious implications they have.

- Blowing an air horn near a coworkers head to scare them. This can rupture an eardrum requiring medical attention and long term hearing loss.
- A worker rides in the bucket of a skid steer. One hard bump and the worker can be tossed in the bucket landing awkwardly and injuring their back, the worker is done for the rest of the day and the next.
- A blast of compressed air. It takes as little as 12psi to pop an eyeball from its socket, and 40psi into the ear from 4” away can cause brain damage.

Side Effects of Jokes in the Workplace

Too many jokes in the workplace can have side effects. People constantly looking over their shoulder and not focusing on their task. Or creating a “one up” feeling that the next prank has to be bigger and more risky than the last. Though the jokes and pranks may not be physically dangerous, they can result in humiliation, embarrassment, distrust and a desire for revenge.

How Can You Prevent

- Don’t initiate horseplay, or get pressured into participating
- If you see coworkers being unprofessional, attempt to correct them
- Follow your company safety rules (i.e. a factory might prohibit running on the work floor unless for an emergency)
- Don’t get caught up in social media trends. The short term high you get from views and likes are not worth losing your job or a serious injury.