

## Injury Prevention

### Make Safety Your New Year's Resolution

Most of us have experienced an accident or injury and know they can occur at any time. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), in 2016 more than 4.1 million workers suffered a serious job-related injury or illness, 94 of which occurred right here at Northwestern.

In an effort to prevent injuries and fatalities, we must think proactively or learn from previous mistakes and identify ways to improve processes. Below is an example, identified by OSHA in 2016, of an employer turning a bad situation into a lesson learned:



*In Chicago, a conveyor loaded with liquid chocolate suddenly started up as a worker was cleaning a roller. Her arm was pulled in and mangled so badly that its repair required a plate and skin grafting. To prevent future injuries, the employer installed metal guards to shield workers' arms and hands from moving machinery as well as warning alarms and flashing lights that are activated 20 seconds before the conveyor moves.*

Similar to the incident above, injuries should always result in assessing the process in which the accident occurred, but a near miss incident should also be treated just as seriously. A near miss incident is an unplanned event that did not result in injury, but

has the potential to do so, and should be reported to your supervisor. Near-miss incidents have the ability to prevent an injury from ever occurring by implementing proactive improvements.

After hazards have been identified, the fundamental method of protecting workers is controlling exposures. The hierarchy of hazard control is a system used to minimize or eliminate exposure to hazards. The components of the hierarchy are listed below:

- **Elimination/Substitution:** Physically removing the hazard is the most effective hazard control, but if that cannot be done, try substituting with a product that does not produce a hazard (e.g. replacing lead-based paint with a non-toxic paint).
- **Engineering Controls:** Isolating the hazard from workers creates a physical barrier between personnel and hazards, such as covering parts.
- **Administrative Controls:** Improvements to the way people work at and around equipment can include procedure changes, employee training, and installation of signs and warning labels. Improvements to the way people work at and around equipment can include procedure changes, employee training, and installation of signs and warning labels.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** When the previous methods cannot be achieved, gloves, respirators, hard hats, and safety glasses can be used. It's important to note that PPE is only protective if worn properly and at the correct times.



We don't need to wait for injuries to happen to take action – conducting weekly inspections in your workplace allows for proactive opportunities to remedy any observed hazards and protect an injury from occurring. If you notice a hazard or process that can be improved, notify your supervisor or Risk Management and brainstorm any improvements you can think of; the people who are most familiar with the process likely have the best ideas for solutions.

**Do your part:** *Office Ergonomics and Bloodborne Pathogens* trainings are available at [learn.northwestern.edu](http://learn.northwestern.edu). **Learn more:** For additional information, please review the [CDC's Injury Prevention & Control guidelines](#).

## Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

- **Preparation is Key:** Be aware of strenuous activities and plan work accordingly. Communicate any observed hazards and ensure you know the proper procedures.
- **Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.
- **Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.
- **Challenge Your Team:** Have your employees offer at least 1 suggestion to make a common task or activity safer. How many can we think of?.

## Safety at Home – Precaution is Better Than Cure

**Did you know?** The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control recorded 31,777,062 injuries in 2015 – the two leading causes were unintentional falls (30%) and unintentional struck by/against objects (13%). Prevent yourself and your loved ones from experiencing an accident or having an injury by following these tips:

- The most frequent types of sports injuries are sprains, strains, and stress fractures, which are not usually caused by a traumatic injury, but rather due to overuse. If it hurts, take a break and change activities. Stretching exercises and staying hydrated can help prevent discomfort and injuries.
- Mount flat screen TVs to the wall to reduce the risk of if toppling off the stand. There has been a 31% increase in TV tip-over related injuries over the past 10 years, and 7 out of 10 children injured by TV tip-overs are 5 years or younger.
- Don't leave a young child in a bathtub alone even for a minute. Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death in the home for children ages 1 to 4, and 1 in 8 respondents say they have left for 5 minutes or longer.

For additional information on protecting children in your home, please review [Safe Kids Worldwide's infographic](#).

## For Additional Information

Please contact [Gwen Butler](#), Director of Environmental Health and Safety, at 847.491.4936.

Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Risk Management Services at [gwen.butler@northwestern.edu](mailto:gwen.butler@northwestern.edu) for details.