

TOOLBOX TALK #3

HORSEPLAY AT WORK IS NO JOKE

Everyone remembers the school class clown – the person always getting into trouble, pulling pranks and being goofy. Harmless stuff, right? Maybe back then. If your workplace has a class clown who engages in horseplay, it's no laughing matter.

Horseplay is rough or rowdy play or pranks that occur at the workplace. It can involve joking that includes physical contact, playing around, racing, grabbing, foolish vehicle operation, social pressure to participate in unsafe acts, harassment and unauthorized contests.

What's the harm?

On-the-job horseplay shouldn't be viewed as harmless fun. Workplace horseplay incidents may lead to serious injuries at work, divide the workplace and prevent employees from getting their jobs done. In some states, horseplay-related incidents that result in injuries can lead to criminal prosecutions. Some courts have determined these incidents to be deliberate acts.

Even if a horseplay incident doesn't result in an injury, practical jokes and misbehaving can lead to humiliation, embarrassment, anger, hurt feelings, distrust and even a desire for revenge among coworkers.

Prevention

How can employers prevent horseplay incidents?

For starters, make it known that workers are responsible for each other's safety. It should be clear to employees that they're to refrain from engaging in unsafe behaviors on the job, follow all workplace rules and regulations, and ensure equipment is used properly. Supervisors and managers have a responsibility to keep their employees' work environment safe and free of harassment by monitoring for and preventing horseplay.