

## COMPLACENCY

My dictionary defines complacency this way, “self-satisfaction accompanied by unawareness of actual danger or deficiencies”.

I am not sure of the statistics, however, there is no doubt in my mind that numerous accidents have occurred due to allowing ourselves to become complacent in our everyday activity. (On and off the job)

I have often said that working safely is not easy, nor is it automatic. We have to work at it with the highest degree of awareness. If we just stop for a moment and think, I bet that you all can come up with instances where you become complacent. It happens to us because we perform many functions on an almost continuous basis. Many of our jobs are repetitive in nature, and the more we repeat what we are doing, the better the chance that we are becoming complacent without even realizing it. Therein lies the potential danger, the danger of complacency.

We must remember that life is what happens, when we are making other plans. We become complacent about our personal safety by repeated exposure to situations without consequence. We take shortcuts and with the absence of consequences, cause us to become more lax about our personal safety; in other words we are becoming complacent. Personal safety is not like a light switch that you can turn on or off. The personal safety switch must continuously be in the on position.

Just because we feel safe, does not mean we are safe. On the contrary, “feeling safe all the time”, could be the biggest threat to our well being, because we are drifting into that complacent mode.

One key to avoid the complacency trap is to form “safety habits”. These are habits that you do over and over until they override your former unsafe behavior and become automated. Habits such as, wearing gloves, glasses, proper foot wear, safety harness on and ready to tie off, face shield when grinding, removing tripping hazards, attending safety meetings and paying attention, using seat belts, tying off a ladder etc etc.

Is it not better to form these types of automatic habits and let them become the norm?

There is an old saying that familiarity breeds contempt. To paraphrase, I would say that, familiarity breeds complacency. Let’s work in a manner that we ensure we do not fall into the complacency trap.

