

THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY MOVEMENT

The effectiveness of the off-the-job safety campaign is shown by the fact that, from the time records were first kept in 1928, both home and public accident death totals (excluding motor vehicle accidents) have declined, despite great increases in population. Even in the field of motor vehicle accidents, the present-day death total is only slightly higher than that of 1937, in spite of the fact that registrations since 1937 have increased more than 150 per cent and vehicle-miles traveled have increased almost 200 per cent.

If industry has been a large contributor to this successful work, it has also been a heavy beneficiary of its fruits. Disruption of labor force, worry and hardship among employees, loss of purchasing power by consumers, and heavy tax burdens for the support of hospitals and relief agencies are all results of off-the-job accidents which affect industry's pocketbook.

Industry and school safety

Why should industry be interested in school safety? Chances are that a child or teenager who is unsafe at school is going to be unsafe on a job.

Unless he has received a thorough background in safety principles during his school years, a child will not have a solid basis on which industry can build a framework for on-the-job safety. On the other hand, if the student has a basic understanding of safety principles, if he has been taught that it's not the right way if it isn't safe, if he has been helped to develop a worthy self-concept as well as a sense of responsibility toward the well-being of others, then industry has a firm base on which to build specific safety habits and techniques.

But industry's vested interest in school safety begins long before it hires a product of the local school system. A worker does not exist in a vacuum. He is not just a person, he is one of a family. And whatever affects his family affects him and his work. If his child is injured at school, the worker may become less efficient, or be absent. Even though he is on the job physically, his thoughts are more likely with his youngster. And who can deny that inattention causes accidents?

If you think childhood accidents are problems of a minor nature, reflect on your own childhood or the experience of your children.

Consider these statistics from the National Safety Council:

In the age group 1-14 years, accidents take more lives than the five leading diseases combined (cancer, congenital malformations, pneumonia, gastritis/enteritis, meningitis).

From ages 15 to 24, accidents claim more lives than all other causes combined!

What can industry do about it? What can the reader of this Manual, as a representative of industry, do about it?

First, find out if your school system has a coordinated safety-education and accident-prevention program. Most school authorities will respond affirmatively, but look beyond the mere "yes" answer. Does the board have a definite, written policy statement on the subject? Is authority for the program well delineated?

Second, find out who is responsible for the systemwide program. You may discover that each school has a safety committee and/or someone (usually the principal) responsible for the safety activities in this school. However, to be truly effective, the safety program must be systemwide. Find out who the supervisor or director is. Ask what sort of accident-reporting and record-keeping system is used. Find out what the major areas of accident experience are and what is being done about it.

If your investigation reveals a well-organized and administered program, support it. Have civic, fraternal and service clubs invite the safety supervisor to discuss his program with them. Arrange field trips so the student safety council or committee can see the importance industry attaches to accident prevention. Perhaps you can help arrange a safety assembly.

And what if there is no organized safety and accident prevention program in your schools?

In that case, start building public support for a program. For help write the School and College Department of the National Safety Council and ask for their statement "Are Your Children Taught to Live?" This is part of NSC's emphasis program. One of its goals is the designation of a safety education supervisor for every school system. This statement is an excellent starting point for discussion in your local civic and service clubs, P-TA's, safety councils, and church groups. Schools are essentially an extension of the community. If the community