

Industrial Safety

The elimination of accidents is vital to the public interest. Accidents produce economic and social loss, impair individual and group productivity, cause inefficiency and retard the advancement of standards of living.⁶

Philosophy of Industrial Accident Prevention

There is no question that accidents are costly to industry and society. Today, failure to try to prevent injuries to employees is indefensible.

The practical and moral aspects of accident prevention are inter-related because accidents result both in a waste of manpower and resources, and in physical and mental anguish

In Medieval days, the master craftsman probably tried to instruct his apprentices and journeymen to work skillfully and safely, because he could see the value of high quality and uninterrupted production. But it took the Industrial Revolution to create the conditions which led to the development of accident prevention as a specialized field.

The industrial safety philosophy was developed as a result of the tremendous forces of production which were released. Without a deterrent to counter this waste of manpower and resources, the number of accidents and injuries would have challenged the imagination.

Although the changes in social responsibility change more slowly than technology, enlightened industrial management had accepted the responsibility for preventing accidents by the first decade of the 20th Century

By 1910, the National Association of Manufacturers was studying the experience of workmen's compensation laws in Europe. This "new" line of thinking held the employer responsible for a share of the economic loss suffered by the employee because of an accident.

It was a rather short step from this to the realization that a large proportion of accidents could be prevented and that the same industrial brain power that could produce vast quantities of goods could also be used for accident prevention. Industry soon discovered that production and safety were related. From this beginning grew the safety movement as it is known today.

The progress in reducing the number of

accidents and injuries in this relatively short period of time has exceeded the highest expectations of the early safety pioneers. In less than one lifetime, safety has become a vital part of industry.

Experience has shown that there is no



FIG 1-1 — Give the man a cigar or (in summer) a fly swatter! This 1913 display used by the Joliet Works of Illinois Steel Company, the first plant to organize a safety committee, offers a variety of safety incentives: watch fobs, paper weights, cigars, and a calendar.

hazard or operation which cannot be overcome by practical safety measures. The future may introduce a type of unavoidable accident, but history indicates that all barriers can and will be surmounted.

In summary, here are the reasons for the

* Excerpt from National Safety Council policy

This chapter was revised by R G Belknap, based upon reviews by selected members of the National Safety Council