

1—Occupational Safety

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.*

Philosophy of Occupational 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 interrelated, because accidents result both in a waste of manpower and resources, and in physical and mental anguish.

In Medieval days, the master craftsman 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 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.

Once enlightened industrial management had accepted the responsibility for preventing accidents, the next step was workmen's compensation laws. 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 efficient 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.



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.

Experience has shown that there is virtually no hazard or operation which cannot be overcome by practical safety measures. The future may introduce a type of unavoidable accident, but history indicates that practically all barriers can and will be surmounted.

In summary, here are the reasons for the continuing, concerted effort to prevent accidents:

1. Needless destruction of life and health is a moral evil.
2. Failure to take necessary precautions against predictable accidents involves moral responsibility for those accidents.
3. Accidents severely limit efficiency and productivity.

*Excerpt from National Safety Council policy.