

Location _____ Trainer _____ Date _____

USE HORSE SENSE: NO HORSEPLAY

Imagine yourself a passenger in an airplane thousands of feet in the air. The last thing you want is for the pilot to engage in some sort of horseplay or stunting. Or suppose you're on a two-lane highway with oncoming cars approaching at 50 or more miles per hour. I bet you'd get pretty tense if it looked as though there were some horseplay going on in a car or cars in either lane.

Well, horseplay on the job is just as dangerous, and the person doing the horsing around is not the only one endangered. The workplace is designed for activities that are planned and controlled. Horseplay is uncontrolled, unplanned, and usually full of surprises. There is no place for it on the job.

A machine shop manager recently listed a number of examples of horseplay that had occurred in his plant, but were fortunately not repeated after the start of a major safety campaign. Here's his list:

- Scaring people with loud noises
- Greasing handles, switches, and locks
- Wiring or otherwise securing doors so they can't be opened
- Blowing clothes with compressed air
- Hiding other people's tools, or tinkering with their equipment

I'm sure you can imagine what some of the dire results of such activities might be.

Fooling around with compressed air, for example can put out an eye, rupture an eardrum, or cause painful hemorrhage.

In addition to the injury toll, horseplay costs thousands of dollars a year in damage to equipment and materials—which has a bearing on profits and jobs. In addition, the reactions of fellow workers to a “joke” could range from a laugh to a punch in the nose, and could trigger hard feelings or a fight that could itself cause an injury and/or dismissal from the job.

Some of the listed stunts were obviously pulled by rather immature, and certainly thoughtless, people, while others seem like the kind of kidding any of us might engage in if we didn't know better. After all, most of us have a good sense of humor and enjoy a good laugh.

But a sense of humor and horseplay are not really as closely related as they might seem. Horseplay often carries many of the characteristics of cruelty as well as immaturity and irresponsibility.

Employees who are truly concerned with their own safety and the safety of co-workers will therefore use their horse sense and resist any temptation to engage in horseplay.