

SAFETY SHOOTER

Tailgating— 5 Minutes is All it Takes

by guest author Caden J. Blevins

It's 7:45 am and you're not quite finished with the last few forms and concrete is on its way. You're working as quickly as you can while trying to keep an eye on boards that have nails sticking out (Fig. 1). Or maybe as you pass under that low-hanging pipe, you're wondering if you should say something about it before the next guy runs into it. What about the coworker who is up on that high ladder that isn't tied off just right? You hurry by and notice that something's not right, but don't take a moment to really see what's wrong. You think, "he's almost finished, he'll be off the ladder soon, he's fine."

Then it happens—you're helping another worker get up off the floor because they just got knocked in the head by that low-hanging pipe. Then you find yourself rushing over to that same guy that you were too busy to help for a few minutes until the high ladder work was completed.

So what's the answer? What should have been done to help keep you and your coworkers safe on the job? Stopping for a few minutes and pulling those nails or moving the material away from the immediate work area. Placing flags on the pipe so everyone knows of its danger and taking a moment to brace

off that ladder so the high work could be finished without incident (Fig. 2).

Let's go back to the very start of the day. Did you have a plan for the day's work? Did you take the time to go over it with the crew? Was there a clear understanding of all the job hazards? Or did you just assume everyone was aware of the same dangers that you were? Take 5 minutes of every day to review with everyone what the work entails and what precautions should be taken for the safety of yourself and the crew working with you. How can you feel good about sending your crew out into the field without doing this first?

Those first 5 minutes are your opportunity to have that simple, quick tailgate meeting. That little meeting that gives you and everyone working with you a chance to bring concerns to the attention of everyone on the job. That chance to review the day's work and to ask those questions that may even save a life; giving you and your crew the opportunity to speak up (Fig. 3). This will serve as a reminder to get some extra guys to move unsafe materials from your work area and allow someone to flag that pipe to tell everyone of its danger.



Fig. 1: Example of impalement hazard via nails



Fig. 2: Example of a clean site from the top of the southeast stair tower (55 Page Street in San Francisco, CA)

Those few minutes to review the day's game plan will remind you that the guy on the high ladder needs a partner helping to brace him.



Fig. 3: Example of a safety meeting (San Jose Airport, Terminal A)



Fig. 4: Example of good work plan in action (San Jose Airport, Terminal A)



Fig. 5: Example of a clean job site with multiple forms at roof—good job planning and execution of work (Mission Bay Life Science Building, San Francisco, CA)

Taking that 5-minute tailgate meeting at the start of every day is the first step to making safety a priority for everyone. It helps to keep work tasks organized and safe, not only for you, but everyone working around you. The more you are aware of the dangers on the job site, the better you can prepare to avoid them altogether. Go over the hazards of the job site and make a good, safe work plan with all the precautions in place before starting the job. That first 5-minute tailgate meeting is the most important 5 minutes of your entire day (Fig. 4).

Shouldn't it be everyone's goal to work through the day to make it home safely to the ones we care for the most? So, take 5 minutes and have that tailgate meeting every day, it always pays to have a safety plan (Fig. 5).



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