



Shortcuts are Not in Your Favor



A man by the name of Louis Binstock once said, “Too often the shortcut, the line of least resistance, is responsible for evanescent and unsatisfactory success.” Simply put, taking shortcuts only results in success for a short duration of time. We’re all guilty of taking shortcuts now and again, whether it’s not signaling to change lanes, skipping a step on the stairs or using a chair instead of a ladder to reach something on the top shelf. But in the safety profession, each time you take a shortcut you also risk cutting your career short by suffering a significant injury – or even death.

Just because you’ve done something a “thousand times” doesn’t mean you’re impervious to an accident or injury, so don’t improvise to save time.

Breaking Bad Habits

Most of us develop bad habits of taking the occasional shortcut while working. If this is true for you, break the habit now. Your safety and well-being are far more important to your manager, co-workers and customers — not to mention your family — than getting the job done quickly. While your boss may admire and appreciate your conscientious effort to finish the job on time, you won’t be admired if your hasty shortcut results in an injury.

If a rushed job results in an accident, not only could it have an effect on your personal, financial and social life, it also may result in the job taking longer or even coming to a complete stop. How many times have you heard of employees incurring back injuries because it was “faster” to lift the load by themselves instead of asking for help or using a mechanical aid? Or someone falls because he stepped onto the top of the ladder instead of locating another ladder long enough for the job?



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We must eliminate this intrinsic need to take shortcuts, but how? Well, we need to allow ourselves enough time to do the job at a safe pace, especially when starting a new job or working in an unfamiliar environment. Just because you've done something a "thousand times" doesn't mean you're impervious to an accident or injury, so don't improvise to save time. Going through a daily checklist and having all the proper tools and safety equipment on hand in advance are just a few ways to save time. It is your responsibility to avoid any potentially dangerous or unsafe job practices. Take the time to lock out/tag out equipment, use fall protection, follow safe ladder procedures and use PPE and the proper tools for the job. This requires planning ahead. We all like to get our work done without unnecessary effort, getting the most out of the time and energy we spend on each task and sometimes this attitude helps us find a better way of getting things done. But at other times, when it leads us to take shortcuts, it can put us on a direct route to trouble. All of us at some time or another have exposed ourselves to possible harm by shortcutting rather than taking the few extra steps required by the safe way. As kids, we hopped the fence instead of using the gate; now we cross the street between the intersections. A successful shortcut—meaning one that results in no damage—nevertheless has a downside. It gives us the feeling that we can always substitute the quick way for the tried-and-true safe way and get out of it in one piece.

"Beginning today, I will no longer worry about yesterday. It is in the past and the past will never change. Only I can change by choosing to do so."

Unknown

Unfortunately, that feeling can be misleading. Take the case of the worker on a ladder who is almost finished with the job except for just a little bit that can be done by reaching farther than the safety guidelines call for. It is decision time: get down, move the ladder, and climb up again, or take a chance. What are the possible outcomes? The worker may luck out and finish the job by reaching, with no trouble. Or leaning too far to the side may cause the ladder to topple and the worker to fall, resulting in a concussion, a broken leg, or a broken neck. What kind of choice was that? One way, the safe way, the odds are 100 to 1 in your favor. There's no way of knowing the exact odds on a given shortcut—but it's surely less than 100 to 1. So the decision to take a chance was not a wise one. Risking your neck to save a few minutes of time is a bad gamble. If you are told to go to a particular work area, your employer expects you to take the safe route, not the shorter, hazardous one. If there isn't a safe way to get where you need to go, let your supervisor know. The supervisor will see to it that you are provided a safe means of access. Even if the job will only take a few minutes, it isn't worth risking your safety and health for those few minutes. Wear personal protection to safeguard your body parts. Use proper, well-maintained equipment. Don't improvise to save time. Ladders, steps, and walkways are built to ensure your safety, as well as for your convenience.

Ref: Aaron J. Morrow; EHS Today

