HORSEPLAY

Safety Meeting Contents

- Meeting Notice
- Leaders Guide
- Employee Handout
- Employee Quiz
- Meeting Sign-In Sheet
- Employee Puzzle

PRIOR TO THE WEEKLY MEETING:

- Post the meeting notice by the timeclock
- Read through the Leaders Guide and Employee Handout to familiarize yourself with the topic for the week
- Make copies of the employee handout (one for each employee)
- Make copies of the employee quiz (one for each employee)
- Make copies of the weekly puzzle (one for each employee)

AT THE SAFETY MEETING:

- Pass around the meeting sign-in sheet – ensure all employees present at the meeting print and sign their names
- Pass out the employee hand-out
- Pass out the employee quiz
- Pass out the weekly puzzle
- Keep the meeting simple
- Encourage discussion and questions
WEEKLY SAFETY MEETING NOTICE

THIS WEEK, OUR SAFETY MEETING WILL COVER HORSEPLAY

TIME: __________________________________________________________

DATE: __________________________________________________________

PLACE: _________________________________________________________
HORSEPLAY

Leaders Guide

EURAMAX PROCEDURE REFERENCE:
None – In Employee Handbook / Work Rules

MEETING OBJECTIVE:
Discouraging horseplay on the job may not be an easy task, but it’s an essential one. Horseplay causes accidents and injuries – sometimes serious or fatal injuries – and all because a practical joke went too far or a little fooling around got out of hand. The purpose of this meeting is to give you an opportunity to make your employees aware of just how dangerous horseplay can be.

MEETING PREPARATION:
Think of a real incident from your work experience in which horseplay led to an accident. Or ask fellow supervisors for a story from their experience. Or use a story that you read about in a safety newsletter or magazine. Be prepared to discuss this case study with your group.

Review the employee handout to see if there are any other materials you wish to bring to the meeting.

Use a flip chart during the discussion to write key points and employee responses. This technique visually reinforces your instruction.

MATERIALS CHECKLIST:
• Flip chart and marking pens

MEETING
INTRODUCTION
Horseplay is the topic of this safety meeting. This so-called harmless fun turns into dangerous acts on the job. Accidents and injuries result. How would you feel if somebody got hurt because you were fooling around? How would you feel if you got hurt because of somebody else’s practical joke? Horseplay is a serious safety topic that deserves our attention.

Horseplay on the job claims lives. One employee was killed when he fell from a cable strung high up across a warehouse. He was trying to perform a tightrope walking act for the amusement of his co-workers. Others have been killed while fooling around on forklifts. Some have been injured or killed while roughhousing around machinery. And still others have been permanently disabled in accidents resulting from horseplay on the job.

Describe the case study you’ve prepared about a real incident of horseplay that led to an accident. Ask the group to comment on the incident.
HORSEPLAY

Leaders Guide

Tell your employees that any future incidents of horseplay will result in immediate discipline.

**Question:** What is horseplay on the job?

**Answer:** It’s practical jokes, pranks, fooling around, roughhousing, etc.

**Question:** What’s wrong with a little fooling around on the job?

**Answer:** It can have tragic results. When you’re on the job, it isn’t the right time or place for horseplay.

**Question:** How can you discourage horseplay?

**Answer:** There are basically three ways you can prevent or discourage horseplay:
- Don’t initiate it.
- Don’t let someone else talk you into it.
- Don’t ignore it when you see it.

**Question:** What does it mean to work defensively?

**Answer:** You need to protect your own safety by watching out for the actions of others while you are working. At the same time, you need to think about the impact of your actions on others.

**Question:** Can you give some examples of how you can work more defensively?

**Answer:** Be aware of what’s happening around you.
- Keep your eyes and ears open.
- Watch out for others, and protect yourself against their unsafe acts.

**Question:** What should you do if you see people engaging in horseplay on the job?

**Answer:** Report it to any supervisor. Don’t feel like you’re betraying a friend or being a snitch. Think of it as preventing an accident – and maybe saving a co-workers life.
HORSEPLAY

Leaders Guide

Question: Another way you can help promote safety and discourage horseplay is to set a good example. What’s involved in setting a good example?

Answer: All you really have to do is take responsibility for your own safety. Setting a good example where horseplay is concerned doesn’t mean you don’t have a sense of humor or that you’re a kill-joy. It simply means that you understand that it’s important to be serious about safety and, as a result, you will not tolerate horseplay on the job.

Question: What’s the likely outcome of the example you set?

Answer: People will respect your integrity. Furthermore, your good example will encourage others to be more safety conscious. You can play a vital role in reducing the dangerous impact of horseplay on the department and throughout the company.

SUMMARY:
We’ve talked about why horseplay is a serious threat to safety. The only question left is, “What are you going to do about it?” The only way we can stop horseplay – and the accidents and injuries associated with it – is with your help. Don’t engage in horseplay and don’t tolerate it. Defend your right to have a safe workplace.

EMPLOYEE HANDOUT:
A. Employee Handout
B. Horseplay Safety Quiz
C. Horseplay Safety Puzzle

QUIZ ANSWERS:
1. False 6. False
2. False 7. True
3. e 8. True
4. True 9. True
5. True
Horseplay on the Job

Daily life on the job can be boring. After all, once you’ve learned the work routine, there’s frequently energy left that can be used for more interesting activities — like, maybe, practical jokes. These stunts are commonplace on the job, and form a means by which life can become more interesting, at least for a moment.

Practical jokes are one thing; their rowdy cousin, horseplay, can be quite another. In general terms, horseplay tends to involve a more physical kind of “joke,” one that the person on the receiving end — and the boss — may not view as funny, or may be taken wrong. Or both.

The problem is that the target of the “joke” may be in a bad mood on a particular day, or the “joke” may focus on someone who is not in the mood for it. Or, the “joke” gets out of hand, leading to an altercation in which words or even fists may fly. The result: a discipline or discharge. What started out in the perpetrator’s mind as a joke ends up in the steward’s lap as a grievance.

Nearly all workplaces have rules that make horseplay an offense punishable by discipline or discharge, so any steward looking to avoid having to deal with a headache down the road might want to offer a little preventive advice to any known joker or joker in the vicinity. Bad things can happen if they humor goes bad. While it’s not the union’s job to maintain workplace discipline, common sense says that if you see something heading your way that can get a co-worker in trouble, you might want to think about doing what you can to make sure it doesn’t get out of hand.

What do you look for? Well, here are a few recent examples of “jokes” that went bad, ending up in arbitration:

Peeking on the Floor

For some reason, a worker thought it would be funny to urinate on the man’s break room floor. His workmates didn’t think it was funny, nor did management: he was fired on the spot, and the arbitrator agreed with the company. He said that employees eat and rest in the break room, and the worker’s conduct violated a company rule stating that indecent conduct may result in discharge.

Topless Trouble

A female employee used the employer’s photo equipment to take pictures of her bare breasts. She did not have permission to use the equipment, and the company discharged her. The arbitrator didn’t agree with the company, reducing the penalty to two months without pay. He said the discharge was “excessive” for horseplay, the pictures were not “obscene” under law, she did not commit sexual harassment, and suspension was more appropriate, sending a signal that the grievant’s misconduct was not condoned.

Bodily Harm: Threats

A worker threatened another employee with bodily harm three times over a five-day period. Management fired him. The grievant claimed it was just horseplay, but the arbitrator upheld the company’s action. He said the employee had been disciplined before for threatening another worker; he admitted to having used nearly all of the specific threatening language that had been alleged; another employee had been fired for similar threatening behavior; and the grievant was not entitled to “justice and dignity” after what he did to another employee.

Bodily Harm: Thrown Object

A worker threw a sledge hammer in the general direction of other employees; it bounced off a parts tub and injured someone. The culprit was fired, but the arbitrator reinstated him without back pay, noting that the employer operated a plant where horseplay was excessive. It was his first offense; he had a clean work record and expressed remorse to the injured worker; the struck worker had not been targeted and would not have been hit were it not for the ricochet; and the act was horseplay, which under the work rules called for progressive discipline.

Bodily Harm: Wrestling

A worker picked up another employee and slammed him down on a table, then grabbed and wrestled to the ground, pinning him while another worker joined in the “horseplay.” The company fired him, but the arbitrator reduced the penalty to a last chance agreement, even though he was already working on a last chance agreement from an earlier incident. The arbitrator said that the previous four disciplines had already been reduced to level three under the company’s discipline system, and the other employee received discipline one level higher than those previously imposed.

Making jokes at other workers’ expense is questionable at any time, but especially so when it gets into humiliating or threatening behavior. If you as a steward have to defend a worker who has committed horseplay or practical jokes, be aware of the employer’s rules that deal with the offense. Best of all, avoid disciplines and discharge situations by warning employees who may have done too far in their “jokes” before they get in trouble, especially those who have gotten into trouble before.

— George Haggard, The author is Professor Emeritus at the School for Workers, University of Wisconsin-Madison
HORSEPLAY
Employee Quiz

1. Workers often anticipate the worst case scenario when they play a “harmless” joke on someone.
   True or False

2. Practical jokes are okay if you’re really stressed out or bored at work.
   True or False

3. To prevent horseplay at work, you should:
   a. Refuse to participate in it
   b. Report it
   c. Discourage it
   d. Not give the prankster an audience
   e. All of the above

4. A practical joke can quickly lead to someone’s death.
   True or False

5. Some horseplay in workplaces is linked to bullying.
   True or False

6. If a prank doesn't cause physical injury, it's safe to do.
   True or False

7. Any workplace tool can be a lethal weapon if misused.
   True or False

8. Ignoring horseplay can be a smart way to discourage it.
   True or False

9. The best way to stop horseplay is to report it.
   True or False
HORSEPLAY
Meeting Sign In Sheet

LOCATION __________________________

MEETING DATE ________________ MEETING CONDUCTED BY __________________________________________

CONTENTS OF MEETING
(Attach Handouts, etc.)

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WEEKLY SAFETY MEETING
All Euramax Subsidiaries

HORSEPLAY
Employee Puzzle

ACCIDENTS
BEHAVIOR
BODILY HARM
DISCIPLINE
GOOD EXAMPLE
HORSEPLAY
INJURIES

PRACTICAL JOKE
PRANKS
PREVENTION
REFUSE
ROUGHHOUSING
TERMINATED