

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

November 2021

Complacency

When you started your first job, however long ago that was, every hazard you saw was visible. Hazards were so obvious to you, and you recognized each one. As you continued in your career and on a project for a long time, your awareness started to diminish. The hazards remained but you started to accept that they are just a part of the background and since you'd avoided injury, you stopped worrying about them. However, those hazards are still as dangerous today as they were on day one. This relaxing of awareness is something that happens to all of us. We see hazards, but as they fail to injure us or create a situation of alarm, we minimize them.

A NASA engineer developed a presentation on the Challenger Space Shuttle explosion wherein he refers to this diminishing awareness and acceptance of problems as a **"Deviation of Normalcy"**. He noted that there had been small defects found during development and testing of the shuttle booster fuel tanks that challenged accepted engineering standards, but as the program went along decisions were made to accept these problems since "nothing has happened so far". We all know the tragic consequences of those decisions, which ultimately resulted in the death of an entire shuttle crew and nearly resulted in cancellation of the space shuttle program.

Taking risks in construction is a daily occurrence. We do the best we can to plan for these risks and mitigate or eliminate them as we plan our work. An important thing to remember as we do our work is that sometimes conditions change, and we must be vigilant in assessing these new changes for the hazards that may accompany them. Adjustments to our work planning are likely as a result.

Do not just accept the changing environment or conditions as a normal thing. Be alert. Make sure that your plan is adjusted and work package changes are made to reflect the new scope. Plan the work based on expected conditions and known hazards, and stop if you encounter something you didn't anticipate.

Going "Home Safe" is something that we should look forward to each day, regardless of the plans or work out in front of us. Don't fall victim to a **"Deviation of Normalcy"**.

SAFETY REMINDER: American alligators have about 80 teeth at a time and use a bite force of 150 to 200 psi. Don't stick your head in the mouth of an alligator. Just FYI

Discussion Points / Question:

1. What is complacency ?
2. How do we avoid complacency?
3. What is a deviation of normalcy?