Horseplay in the Workplace

Introduction:

You may have witnessed horseplay in the workplace; people pushing one another, roughhousing, running, chasing, throwing tools, pulling the chair away when someone goes to sit down, using equipment or PPE improperly, distracting those operating heavy machinery, operating machinery recklessly, making a loud noise towards someone, or turning off the lights. These are just some of the incidents of “horseplay” or reckless behavior that can put someone, including yourself, at risk of unnecessary injury, or cause damage to property. “We were just having fun or it was just a joke”, is the reason for participating in horseplay. Although, horseplay often involves the characteristics of cruelty, irresponsibility, and immaturity. What was meant to be an innocent or playful action could have deadly consequences.

Discussion Points:

- What is “horseplay”?
- Horseplay in the workplace could have deadly consequences
- Recording “horseplay” on the OSHA 300 Log
- Following company safety rules and policies involving reckless behavior

Discussion:

The workplace environment should be a place where an employee enjoys work and feels safe while working. Targeting horseplay at others when they are not expecting the distraction can easily turn dangerous and creates unnecessary risk.

According to OSHA, injuries to employees occurring at the workplace as a result of “horseplay” are recordable on the OSHA 300 Log, as long as the injury meets the general recording criteria. Employers are encouraged to review their recordkeeping practices to confirm they are complying with OSHA recordkeeping rules. Also, horseplay or reckless behavior while at work can eliminate workers’ compensation. For an injury to qualify for workers’ compensation benefits, it must be an accident that resulted when the employee was working responsibly, and cannot be the result of the injured worker participating in intentional or willful harm, negligent or criminal action, or horseplay.

The best way to avoid potentially hazardous situations in the workplace is to have safety rules and procedures designed to protect employees, and provide for a safe work environment. The employer should ensure that the policies are clearly outlined in the employee handbook, and that the employee is made aware of the consequences of their behavior, and understand what unacceptable behavior involves, and is not allowed in the workplace. Following company safety rules and policies will help workers stay safe while on the job, and protect their rights to obtain benefits in the event of a work injury. Avoid participating in reckless behavior; if you see others taking part in horseplay, report it to a supervisor. An incident can affect you, your job, and the company.

As always, stay safe out there!