



OCTOBER 2023

TOOLBOX TALKS

Peer Pressure Influence on Safety

Growing up we have all learned about peer pressure and how it can be used to steer us down the wrong path in life. Built into us as human beings, is the need to conform with the groups of people in which we interact. Good parents understand this and warn their influential children and teenagers about not letting their peers get them involved in activities that will cause them personal harm or get them in trouble. Proactive parents will involve their children in activities that will be good for them and places where they will be exposed to positive role models and positive like-minded peers. These parents will utilize the built-in need to conform to their advantage and ultimately to the benefit of the child.

Human behavior in the workplace is no different and even here peer pressure is all around us. Initial hardworking, safety-minded personnel can see their performance quickly deteriorate when they are exposed to unsafe, corner-cutting, negative workplaces. Even as adults we are wired to follow the crowd, so it is critical to create a strong conscientious safety-focused work environment where workers are positively recognized for doing the right thing, leading to personnel:

- Being trained, equipped, and fit for duty
- Planning work activities supportively together
- Assessing the risks associated with the planned activities
- Supervising / monitoring the activities including constructively correcting unsafe behaviors
- Understanding they have the right to utilize their Stop Work Authority when the work is not being carried out as intended or they recognize unsafe actions and conditions

A new Technician to the Wind Industry was assigned to a Wind Farm where she began a mentoring assignment under the supervision of a 7-year experienced Technician. Before arriving at the Wind Farm the new technician had undergone a robust set of training in both industry and company specific requirements. The company focused training included a thorough initiation into a set of 10 safety golden rules that were designed to prevent serious injuries and fatalities to all employees. One of the golden rules was the strict prohibition on the use of a cellphone or mobile device when driving or operating equipment.

On her first day she and the experienced technician completed their morning meeting and proceeded to drive to their first turbine of the day with the experienced technician performing the driving duties. As they neared their assigned turbine he picked up his cellphone off the console and began texting madly. After he finished, she confronted him saying "I had just been taught that texting or talking on the cell while driving is a big No-No and I could be fired because of it". The seasoned technician responded, "Yeah I know but out here Site management requires you to be in communication all the time and if you don't respond right away they think you are slacking or don't care." "We have to get the job done." She reluctantly accepted his answer but said to herself she herself would never break the rule.

Over the course of 8 weeks, she became more comfortable with her work but noticed that he wasn't the only one utilizing their cell phone while driving. It seemed to be the norm at the site. One day she was off on her own and while driving to a turbine her cellphone alerted her to a text message, she peaked at it and saw it was from the site management and decided she better answer the text. So fearful of getting in trouble she broke the golden rule, the one she said she would not break.

Over the next 2 weeks this became the new "normal" for her and She was continually on her phone while she was in the driver's seat. This was the case late in the afternoon 2 weeks later. She proceeded down a slight inclined dirt covered county road and distracted by her phone She did not see she was approaching an uncontrolled intersection. When she looked up she was nearly in the intersection and another truck was bearing down on her right side. She slammed on the brakes but the other vehicle slammed into her front passenger side spinning her around, the other vehicle rolling over multiple times. Amazingly the 2 passengers in the other vehicle were treated for only minor injuries but she suffered significant neck and back injuries which still trouble her today.



How can your actions impact the safety culture or other lives?