RATIONALIZING

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Rationalizing Unsafe Choices

Making the decision to follow every single safety rule or procedure doesn't come naturally to most. We constantly must work towards making the right decisions every single day. All too often we find ways to rationalize not working safely. Ever use the statement, "this will only take a second." I have, and my 1st grader typically reminds me, "Dad, that was way longer than one second." It is important for each of us to recognize this error trap and address it when it arises.

Why We Rationalize Unsafe Choices

For the most part, we all know what the right choice is when it comes to safety during a specific task. Safety training, policies, procedures, etc. We must all communicate what needs to be done to mitigate hazards and work safely. The problem is, there are many factors that affect whether we want to make the right decisions at any given moment. A few of these factors include:

- Time, schedule, pressure, end of the day
- Lack of supervision
- Lack of enforcement of rules
- Energy Levels
- Mood

Individuals experiencing these factors may use them to rationalize why a certain safety rule does not need to be followed. For example, "I forgot my fall protection, but it will only take a minute to go up and right back down, so I will be fine."

What's the "Normal" behavior

When there are other people around who are not making the correct choices, it becomes the "normal thing to do despite not being the correct thing to do. When the norm is working unsafe, it makes it difficult for even the individuals who want to work safely to do so. Make the decision to keep yourself safe/healthy despite what others may be doing.

Summary

Recognize when you are falling into the trap of rationalizing a poor decision, whether that is in your personal life or while on the job. Fight the urge to make the easy decision.

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