

Horseplay Can Be Deadly

It seemed like a sure way to get some laughs. Some of the guys greased the rungs of Jose's ladder while he was up there with a can of paint. But the punch line wasn't very funny. Jose decided to press charges and is preparing a civil lawsuit to cover the cost of his broken leg and lost work time. Some old friendships came to an end that day.

Practical jokes and horsing around in the workplace are always wrong. Chances are that in Jose's case, one person suggested the joke and the others went along with it against their better judgment. There always seems to be someone who is thinking of ways to get a laugh at another person's expense. Most of us feel uneasy around this type of person. The best thing you can do for yourself and others is listen to your inner voice. Let the joker know in no uncertain terms that you're not going along with the joke and that you think it's wrong. You'll often be surprised to find out how many other people have been thinking the same thing but didn't have the courage to say it.

Even if a joke or horseplay isn't dangerous in itself, it can result in humiliation, embarrassment, anger, hurt



feelings, distrust and even a desire for revenge. When practical jokes are common at the worksite, it's hard to pay attention to your job, because you always find yourself on the lookout for the next joke. And horseplay is a safety hazard that can quickly get out of hand and lead to injury or death. If you get hurt as a result of horseplay, don't expect to be covered by workers' compensation; it's not considered a job-related injury. And if someone gets hurt as a result of your horseplay or joke, you may be liable for damages and you'll definitely be at risk of losing your job.

Remember, it's up to everyone to protect each other's safety by keeping horseplay and practical jokes out of the workplace. You don't have to confront the practical joker in front of everyone; you can take him aside and remind him of the possible consequences, or express your concerns to a supervisor.