

Knowing Your Job

Good housekeeping, taking responsibility for safety and using protective clothing and equipment are all important aspects of job safety. But one of the most important things you can do is to know what you're doing. You may take your job skills for granted, but they're essential for your safety and the safety of others.

You're trained in many areas of your work. You know the right way to use equipment and how to operate a piece of machinery safely. And you would never use equipment you weren't trained to use. Yet, accidents often happen because people don't know what they're doing. No matter how careful you are, if you overload a crane because you don't know what its load limit is, you're headed for a worksite disaster. And if you use dangerous materials, such as flammable liquids, without knowing their properties, you could put the whole crew in danger.

Knowing your job means knowing what you can and can't do with the equipment and material you use. It means knowing when to wear protective equipment and exactly what protection is right for the operation you're doing. You wouldn't think of using ordinary safety goggles for welding, any more than you would use welding goggles when grinding or sawing.

The first rule of safety is: Know your job. When you know your job, you also know that no matter how skilled you are, you still need to guard against the dangers that are part of it. You won't be tempted to cut corners on safety.

The second rule of safety is: When you



don't know, ask. No one is so skilled that he or she knows everything there is to know. And skills and techniques change all the time. Or you may have done an operation hundreds of times and realized that you've forgotten some detail that you need to know to be safe. Refresh your memory by rereading safety procedures from time to time. And if you can't find what you need to know, ask your supervisor, especially when it comes to safety.