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The Misattribution of Safety: Unveiling the Risks of Neglecting Workplace Safety



According to Harvard Health Publishing, *“Misattribution occurs when you remember something accurately in part, but misattribute some detail, like the time, place, or person involved.”* (Harvard Medical School, 2021).

Beyond the spectrum of workplace hazards, misattribution emerges as an additional risk, particularly following an extended absence from the workplace, such as during the recent holidays. The potential lapse in memory regarding hazards or safety protocols may elevate the risk of workplace incidents.

In a previous blog, we discussed the importance of Health and Safety in the Workplace and explored *the benefits associated with Occupational Health and Safety Consultants (OHS Consultants)*, in this article we explore the misattribution of workplace safety while highlighting the risks associated with neglecting it.

Is Your Company at Risk of Safety Hazards?

Returning to work after an absence brings various emotions to the forefront, ranging from excitement to seeing your coworkers, to a lack of interest in returning. These emotions distract you from the basic workplace safety elements, resulting in an increased need for employers to enhance and refine their safety awareness programmes.

In addition to the mental distractions, returning to the workplace could be accompanied by the misattribution of safety elements, for instance what hazards are present or where are the assembly points located? Due to complacency, the employee is unlikely to review the workplace safety management system on their return.

Tips on how an employer can offset these workplace safety risks in January?

Brainstorm with your Safety Consultant on methods to boost and strengthen your Safety System, which would give rise to some fantastic suggestions. Some steps that can be considered are the following:

- Return to work “orientation”, with a focus on both new and old safety matters. During the session, it would be beneficial to get safety feedback from the employees on the previous year’s safety!
- Relocation of the Notice Boards could draw the attention of the employees and may result in them being more attentive to the information on display.
- Substitution of hazards and training surrounding the new less hazardous source would make the returning employees more attentive to the actual hazard they need to deal with.

In Conclusion

Having a break from work is a necessity for an employee’s mental health. This, however, requires additional measures to be put in place by the employer to prevent any incidents or accidents.

A regular review of your safety plan or procedure, in consultation with a safety consultant, will assist in reducing the probability of an on-duty injury, while applying additional measures could make the return to work a pleasant one.

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About the Author: Stefan Beytell is an experienced Health and Safety Professional who started his career within the banking environment as a corporate medic. He currently holds the title of OHS Practitioner. He holds several qualifications which include a Btech., a NDip in Safety management and a certificate in ISO45001 facilitation and implementation. He is currently completing his last modules in a BA Disaster and Safety Management.

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