

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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Safety was never a priority point I had put in my life, however strictly advocated by my parents who both work in the Engineering and Petroleum field (and we all know how strict Exxon Mobile is with their safety meetings). However, after I finished my OSHA course, I realized how my poor practices would lead to devastating results in the future.

A hobby of mine is design work, and I get regularly commissioned for custom designs in the fashion industry, which was a profession not covered in depth in the OSHA program. Even as such, many safety habits that were covered in the program were applicable to the daily events that occurred because of my work.

The first topic was ergonomics, which makes up the bulk of the corrections I made to bring safety into my life. While sitting at the desk, in front of the sewing machine or computer, good posture was the first thing I put into practice to ensure back problems didn't hinder me from future work. While bringing rolls of fabric or heavy woods or appliances, I made sure to do it in a manner that lessened the stress on my body. While in front of the computer, or electronic devices, I made sure to rest my eyes and regularly look away, to prevent bad eyesight from developing.

Fire safety also made its way into my daily life, after I learned the importance of preventing accidents through engineering controls to protect people, and valuable equipment. Fabrics, flammable materials, such as wood, and plastics were stored in a secure, dry place away from potentially flammable objects such as heat tools, outlets, and any machines. New fire extinguishers were bought and stored in proper locations to accommodate the potential type of fires that could occur around heat tools and electronic devices.

I made measures to protect my own body from external sources of danger as well, wearing close toed shoes during heavy work, and gloves, glasses and a gas mask when dealing with potentially harmful chemicals, such as spray paint, fabric sealer, dyes, and heat sealing fabrics which could produce smoke with natural fabrics.

Pins and sharp objects found their way back to drawers, pincushions and penholders to prevent injuries or the spread of blood and contaminants to other people that could walk by my work area. Surfaces began to be cleaned once a week to prevent harmful pathogens, and any electronic device was turned off before they were unplugged from the charging outlet, which I made sure to clear a space for in case it malfunctioned and caused a fire.

While using the sewing machine, I made sure to change needles monthly to lower the noise level that increases when the needle dulls against the fabric. When a pin or needle broke, they were put in the proper sharp object disposal container that would be disposed of properly later.

Many changes concerning safety were made after my OSHA program was completed. The program made me realize that practicing safety now, would benefit myself and others in the future, and definitely not a liability even if it took extra time to complete. (Quite the opposite, in fact. Cleaning time takes a lot less if everything is taken care of in the same instance in which it occurred.) Even with the industry that is associated with the least amount of hazards unlike construction work which was frequently mentioned in my program, I was able to implement the safe practices OSHA has taught me during my sessions. Because of that, my workspace has become a cleaner and safer place for not only me but for people around me as well. With actions like these that are beneficial in the present and in the future, I vow not only to keep these practices, but to help others around me Start Safe, and Stay Safe too.