

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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As a junior in high school, I was one of the few people in my class who had not yet completed the OSHA training. Everyone had talked about it, but I was unsure of what it was truly about. Finally, I had completed the training for my culinary arts class and had gained an entirely new perspective on safety. I learned about hazards that felt as though they should be common sense safety tips, but there were also certain hazards that you might not typically come to think of without this training. My dad is a plumbing contractor. After completing my OSHA training, I asked him what he knew about the safety program.

“Well, I know everything, but especially when it comes to OSHA,” he said sarcastically; though, he certainly was not lying about his vast knowledge pertaining to OSHA safety. He continued and told me about when he began his plumbing career working under another employer. One of his co-workers had not properly dug a hole that my dad was going to work in later. Instead of digging the hole in a “V” shape so that it didn’t cave in, the co-worker dug it straight down. Later on as my dad crawled into the hole, part of the wall caved in and my dad was buried in compacted dirt from the waist down. He and his co-workers on the site were luckily able to help unbury him and he was unharmed. While my dad was fortunate in this instance, it could have ended much differently. Had it been from the chest down rather than the waist, he would have been unable to breathe. Had it fully collapsed and buried him completely, it would have been certain death and he would not be here today. The thought that I could be without my father due to a work-site incident is utterly terrifying. It reminds me of the importance of following safety guidelines at all times; you never know when you might be putting your life or another person’s life in danger. This theory is demonstrated by OSHA and it applies to all areas of life.

After I graduate, I would like to become a dietitian. In order to learn more and become experienced in the field, I have begun an internship at my local hospital for this semester. Although we do not dig deep holes in the hospital, we are surrounded by chemicals, blood and other bodily fluids regularly. Which provides just as much danger as digging holes, just a different type of danger. OSHA has also taught me how to be safe in these situations. If there is ever an issue with a chemical, such as getting a rash after cleaning a counter surface, I know exactly where our MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) is located in the hospital. I can use this as a tool to know what chemical I am dealing with, how serious it is, and what to do about the situation at that point. I also know how dangerous working around other people’s blood can be. Whenever there is blood in the hospital, we have to make sure to wear gloves. We also sanitize our hands whenever we enter or exit a room. Working in the hospital does not require me to do hard physical labor where you might expect safety issues to arise. Nevertheless, my OSHA training has taught me just how potentially dangerous working in this setting can be and how important it is that I am always aware of my surroundings and how to apply the safety standards put forth by OSHA for my best interest.

While I do not plan to become a plumber at any point in time, I do plan to work in the medical field and so it is very important that I am aware of all types of safety hazards and how serious something so seemingly harmless can be. After hearing from my dad and working in the hospital, I not only understand what OSHA is, but also why it is incredibly important to follow. While something may appear harmless and unnecessary, it can be very serious and even fatal. This is true no matter where you go and what you do. There are situations we face every day that challenge us with making safe decisions. OSHA is an effective program that has taught me as well as several other peers and others how to make these safe decisions.