

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

David Gregoroich

Marquette Senior High School

My OSHA 10-hour wallet card has greatly influenced the way I recognize hazards. Since the training, I have been able to recognize potential work hazards, report and follow up on those hazards, and the importance of controlling workplace violence. Most importantly, however, I have learned that everyone has a part to share in a safe working environment!

Before beginning the OSHA training, I was under the impression that a person's place of employment was completely responsible for providing a safe working environment. I have learned it is an employee's responsibility to report and advocate on possible lapses in a safe working environment. If an employee notices something unsafe and then gets hurt by it without reporting the incident, they are just as responsible for their injury as the employer is.

A personal example of this self advocacy is during my management at my local Burger King. At work one day, I noticed a possible hazard while earning my OSHA card. I had always chained CO2 tanks at work, but I never noticed anything unsafe about them. Finally, I noticed the tanks were not chained up and had no means of security from falling. This concerned me since many inspectors had said nothing about this in the past. In the interest of my safety and that of my co-workers, I decided to act.

I first brought the issue to my store manager. She told me there was no rule requiring the tanks be chained up. I replied telling her that although that might be true, I felt uncomfortable with it. She gave me permission to go above her head to get the problem resolved. I sent an email to my boss's boss to pass on my concerns to her. After a sincere reply and a week's time, we had chains and a new shelf to secure the tanks. I was grateful that my concern was addressed, and later learned it is highly recommended that the tanks be securely fastened. I was thankful I decided to take action.

Although I had always understood that yelling and screaming at work was negative, I didn't realize it was big enough to be considered a form of violence. My management style had always been very laid back when it came to interfering with the arguments employees had with each other. Since watching the OSHA workplace violence, however I have been more prone to meditating the arguments and even encouraging solutions. My rationale is that if I determined the argument had to happen, I would rather it happen in a place and time that someone could control it rather than during a busy time where the effects could be detrimental and even spill over onto other workers.

I had an incident recently involving two crew members who both claim the other wasn't doing their job and they were picking up each other's slack. I had let the situation go for a few days assuming that they would work it out. Finally I pulled the two outside, sat on the curb, and forced them to figure out the problem. In the end they both agreed the other at least had some valid points and they would work on doing a better job with each other. Feeling accomplished that my shifts would run smoother, I then let the two work it out. They became friends after that.

The OSHA training I received was not overly lengthy, and I learned enough from it that I could successfully apply the concepts I learned into my workplace. With clinicals at the local hospital coming soon, I am thankful for everything the safety training has taught me. I hope to learn even more about creating and maintaining a safe working environment as I further my medical education.