

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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My OSHA 10-hour wallet card has impacted how I recognize hazards tremendously. I believe it will benefit my future, particularly, how I stay safe in my workplace. Accordingly, I started to look at noise, hazardous chemicals, fall protection, emergency action plans, and fire protection a lot more seriously than I used to.

Through this course, I learned that noise may cause permanent damage and could be as bad as hazardous chemicals. I was surprised by the fact that noise may lead to hearing loss. Before this course, I used to blast music on full volume into my earbuds, but that changed fast after I took this session. OSHA sets a limit to the amount of noise level as well as the time that is safe around that noise in the workplace with proper hearing protection. While it's pretty obvious that you have to be safe around chemicals, I never know that the OSHA requirements are the reason behind implementing safety standards to keep the workplace free of hazards. These requirements include giving the employees the right to know about any hazardous chemicals in their workplace and having proper equipment to reduce any type of injuries that can be caused.

The other thing that I changed my perspective of is fall protection and how important it really is. My old perspective was that when you fall it's just a couple of bruises, scratches, or sometimes some broken bones. However, this course opened my eyes on a group of people who work in the construction industry. Roofers, for example, have the highest fatal injury and death rate. Therefore, appropriate safety materials like ladders, safety nets, and specific guardrail systems are mandated. OSHA guidelines require that jobs like these provide training on this equipment and certain first aid and rescue techniques to protect workers.

The emergency action plan was a new topic that I never heard about. For the first time, I learned about how emergency action plans provide information on methods for reporting an emergency, such as being able to dial 911 or using other internal sources. It would also contain instructions for exiting, like not using an elevator if a fire happens or going to the nearest staircase to escape an emergency. Also, these evacuation procedures have information to evacuate for people that have mobility issues. OSHA helps ensure that these emergency plans are present, up-to-date, accessible, and that every employee is trained on the plan.

In addition, I gained a lot of knowledge on fire protection. This includes very useful information on how to prevent fires and what to do if you are present during a fire outbreak. I learned that there are five different extinguishers; class c, class d, class k, class a, and class b that are used for distinct fire situations. Class c is used for electrical engaged equipment while class d is used for combustible metals. However, Class k is mainly for combustible cooking media such as vegetables or animal oils and fats. This is one of the most common fires that happened. Class a consisted of ordinary fires that are caused from wood, cloth, and paper. The last class, which is class b is for fires that occur from flammables like liquids, gases, and greases. Before doing the OSHA program, I only knew that fire extinguishers existed, but I didn't know there were specific ones for different fire outbreaks. I also learned how to operate a fire extinguisher by following the PASS order. The first thing you do is to pull the pin and aim at the base, then you squeeze the handle and sweep from side to side putting out the fire. I think learning about fire protection is really important because it is a very easy situation to get held up in and without the OSHA program I wouldn't be as educated right now.

In conclusion, I realized that knowledge is power, and safety doesn't happen by accident. OSHA has an important mission which is to ensure that employees work in a safe and healthful environment. Therefore, educating the workers about their rights is key in this process. I am so glad that I was exposed early in life to OSHA.