

National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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Completing the OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Healthcare course has made me become aware of the importance of cultivating a safe workplace. I am interested in venturing into the medical field, and this course has deepened my knowledge of safe practices one must perform in healthcare careers. I learned about the importance of using personal protective equipment (PPE) while working with bodily fluids, infectious diseases, and other ailments. I now know how to locate important information about hazardous chemicals on the labels provided on the container, and I learned how to safely handle workplace violence. The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate how the information I learned through this course has impacted the way I recognize dangerous materials in the workplace, while also showing how this course has benefited me in my personal life.

As a previous volunteer at my local hospital, I often engaged with patients, and that experience taught me the importance of using PPE. The OSHA course reinforced the knowledge I gained through my experiences as a volunteer: before I enter a patient's room, I must put on a PPE. Once I have a PPE, I should make sure that my movements are calculated so that I do not spread any diseases or contaminations I come in contact with. Once I finish my task with the patient, I must discard the used PPE appropriately in the trash receptacles. Then, I must wash my hands and perform sanitary procedures before visiting the next patient. While this information is useful in the healthcare setting, it can also be applied to my everyday life. Due to the current pandemic, PPE has become a staple equipment for me to protect myself from the virus. Therefore, I undergo the process of donning my PPE when I leave my house, which enables me to practice how it is done in a professional setting. Gaining this knowledge of using PPE appropriately has impacted the way I recognize hazardous materials because I make sure I am not spreading infectious diseases by taking the necessary precautions.

While PPE is useful when working with infectious diseases, it is also useful in preventing contact with hazardous chemicals. These chemicals can create fires and even lead to fatal consequences if the worker lacks understanding of the type of chemicals they are working with. I was an intern for a STEM program this previous summer, and while it was virtual, I had limited knowledge of the different chemicals I may have come across if I were to complete the internship in-person. However, the OSHA course has taught me that I have the right to know the differences between many hazardous materials through the HAZCOM program. I have also become familiar with the nine pictograms that delineate the physical hazards that are most common in the workplace and in everyday life. Therefore, this knowledge is useful to me because I can easily differentiate between two hazardous chemicals, helping me avoid any dangerous chemical I may come across.

In addition to learning about the different pictograms, I have also learned how to dissolve workplace violence, which will prove to be beneficial in any setting where I must socialize with patients and strangers. I once had a summer job as a soccer coach, where I taught little kids how to play soccer. Undergoing this course at that time would have made me become more knowledgeable in assessing the severity of a particular situation that may result in violence. I have learned that workplace violence is not limited to physical assault. Rather, it can come in many forms such as verbal outbursts. It is also possible for a patient to instigate violence on a worker, and as a potential healthcare worker, I realize the value in learning how to resolve violence in the workplace. By engaging in this course, I have learned that I should use verbal and non-verbal tactics to de-escalate the situation by being empathetic, apologizing if I am in the wrong, and becoming aware of my demeanor. Knowing these will not only help me in the workplace but also in real life when I'm faced with a violent situation. I feel well-equipped to navigate that process and resolve any issues that may lead to violence.

This 10 Hour Course has helped me recognize hazardous situations. In any setting I am in, whether it be a professional setting or in my personal life, I feel as if I have an adequate understanding of how to identify hazardous materials, wear PPE properly, and de-escalate conflict. My knowledge in these skills will benefit me greatly as I venture on to the medical field. I can not wait to further apply the knowledge I gained from this course into the real world.