



MAFES Dawg Tracks

July 30, 2012



Hurry! Haste is Hazardous



After an accident or incident, have you heard a bystander or significant other say, “Well, he or she just got in too big of a hurry,” or maybe they would have said, “If they had been watching their business, that probably wouldn’t have happened.” The implication here is that the parties were working too fast, probably influencing the accident. However, there are other factors that can result in an accident or an incident.

There are two other factors that come into play when we are discussing accident or incidents from hurrying. These are risk perception and decision-making, which in my opinion are major factors in accidents or incidents. The stress of being in a hurrying mode can affect either of these factors.

Risk perception refers back to an individual’s judgment on an accident actually happening when we are involved in a particular act or behavior pattern. To me “bungee jumping” is a perfect example of risk perception. I have watched folks strap on the gear and jump from a bridge in Costa Rica which is 250 or 300 ft. from the water and also from high rise platforms of the about the same height. The perception of these folks is that the risk is minimal, but it is a major life threatening ordeal for me. In comparison, I see no risk in leaving a boat dock at 4:30am in the morning in sub-freezing weather to get to a duck blind. Both of these scenarios are risk perceptions, and the risks are in the eyes of the beholder.

I spent many years in apparel manufacturing and witnessed so many ladies that sewed the same operation for many years. They had performed their job with the same method and machine for so long that it seemed automatic to them. But, sometimes and unfortunately, reality would set in. They would get distracted for looking off at something or someone in the factory or talking to their neighbor and bang!! They sewed their finger or sewed a wrong seam, thus having to stop to check out their finger wound or to repair their miss-sewn seam - both of which will hinder their output temporarily. The perception of risk is minute here compared to other types of work. But the perception of risk might influence their monetary earning for that day due to either one of these incidents.

Farmers or construction workers face the same dilemma when they are rushing to beat a rain storm or trying to meet a tight work schedule. The chance of having an accident increases with them as they are rushing to complete their tasks. When, if they used a little rationale and slowed their pace to remain focused on safety and quality of work, they would reduce the odds of an accident or incident.

Decision-making refers to the process or strategy that one uses in arriving at a solution to a problem. Normally, alternatives to problems aren’t organized very well, and there is usually no systematic approach to a solution. When a quick “ASAP” solution is needed, it usually is a “seat of the pants” decision, and oft times it might be a “knee-jerk,” of which both can be troublesome. This reminds me of a slogan on a plaque that I had one time, “When you’re up to your back in alligators, it’s hard to remember that my initial objective was to drain the swamp.” The right decision sometimes becomes difficult when you lose focus of your first objective. Sometimes we get swamped with problems and forget what our primary objective was.

It always helps to explore the possibilities or alternatives when a situation arises so that you have an escape plan or a possible alternate decision to a “knee-jerk.” One of the objectives when fighting a fire is to always look for an escape route, in case you get trapped. “Seat of the pants” decisions won’t work in catastrophic situations, but advanced planning will.

In a situation that relays more closely to our mode of work, think about the farmer baling hay and he sees rain clouds moving in. If he leaves the hay in the field to dodge the oncoming rain, he could delay the baling until it dries again or he may even lose what is left. The machine isn’t working as normally as it should, but he continues on to try to “beat” the rain. He finishes the field, but the baler completely breaks down; the costs to repair are several hundred dollars. The “what-ifs” abound. If he had left the unbaled part and left before the rain, performed the necessary repairs, the cost of repairs could have been minimal compared to the cost of the hay or the repairs caused by the continued use and total breakdown. There could have been safety issues with the malfunctioning baler that he didn’t consider. Possibly advanced planning and checking the machine closer before he started in this field might have saved money on repairs and putting himself in “harm’s way” with the machine not working properly.

Some folks will tell you that risks are a part of life and trying to make haste is also a part. Both of these facts are true, but we need to have an understanding of how risk perception and decision making under stress can influence our thoughts and behavior. Being familiar with a situation is an advantage in considering these two factors: But forethought still should be given to the risks of what could happen, along with advance planning, and exploring some alternatives that might assist in reducing the potential for an accident or incident.

**THE CHANCE TAKER IS THE
ACCIDENT MAKER!**
Xxxxxxx
**~~THE SAFEST RISK IS THE ONE
YOU DIDN'T TAKE~~**

Ted Gordon-Risk Mgmt. / Loss Control Mgr.
MAFES / MSU-ES (662) 566-2201
Excerpts: www.web.extension.illinois.edu
5/4/2012