

Temporary Becomes Permanent

“Just for now” is how a lot of permanent hazards start.

Hi everyone,

This week's safety message is about how temporary decisions become standard practice, and why that creates risk.

This happens two ways.

One is physical. Something gets set down “for now” and never moves. Materials build up. Walkways get tighter. Clear spaces disappear.

That leads to real issues. Trip hazards increase. Access to exits and panels gets blocked. Fire load builds without being controlled.

The other is in how the work gets done. Equipment goes down. A process changes. Someone finds a way to keep things moving. That may make sense in the moment. The problem is when that workaround keeps getting used.

At that point, we are no longer working the way the job was designed. Controls get skipped. Steps get missed. People start relying on memory and habit instead of a defined method.

That is where injuries happen.

And it travels. A temporary hose that never got replaced. A bypass that was only supposed to last one shift. A workaround one crew uses and the next crew never hears about. Once it gets passed along by habit instead of written down, it is not temporary anymore. It is the process, and nobody ever reviewed it.

This is not about blame. Usually people are trying to keep work moving. The issue is when temporary decisions are never reset or reviewed.

If something is temporary, it needs to be moved back when the task is done. If a workaround is being used more than once, it needs to be looked at.

A simple way to do both: when you set up anything temporary, decide who will put it back and when. If a workaround gets used a second time, bring it to your supervisor. It either becomes the right method, written down and trained, or it goes away.

That is how we keep temporary from becoming permanent.

Stay safe,

Marc Bradburry II

Big Bearded Ginger