

Howard Talks Tech

Do injured employees have Leprosy?

In ancient times “**Lepers**” were those who were rejected by society and this is the most devastating thing about neglected, untreated **Hansen’s disease**. Outbreaks of leprosy have affected, and panicked, people on every continent for centuries. Yet, even today every two minutes someone is diagnosed with leprosy somewhere in the world. It causes nerve damage and muscle weakness that can lead to deformities, crippling, blindness and isolation. Many Americans think leprosy no longer exists. But, there were 208,619 new **leprosy cases** registered globally in 2018, according to official figures from 159 countries from the 6 WHO Regions. Physical Leprosy can result in rejection where there are no treatment facilities and no health education by which other people may be freed from superstition and ignorance.

Why is it that some **accident victims** are treated like lepers? Ignorance and superstition label some injured people as “Accident Prone” or “just stupid” yet, those same accusatory individuals who make that claim are often themselves blind to recognizable hazards, weak procedures or the failures of management systems.

Perhaps the injured person was not trained. Maybe they were not given or shown how to wear the proper personal protective equipment, or maybe they were never persuaded of the value to them of following the rules. Some injured parties just did not recognize the hazard and accepted the risk, even though they did not comprehend the potential serious consequences. Shouldn’t the pain and suffering of injury itself be a sufficient penalty for inattentiveness? COVID-19 taught us who truly are, “Critical Employees.”

Some accident victims are shunned because “they broke our record and cost us a reward.” Incentive programs have their place and we all need to encourage best practices and discourage “*At-Risk*” behaviors. But, it is far better to learn from all events, to avoid the same type of injuries in the future.

When a worker is injured, it impacts all of us. We may be asked to work overtime on the tasks the injured person would normally do. Maybe we have the sickening job of cleaning up after the devastation. Or perhaps we are the supervisor who must complete the **dreaded** “*Accident Report*”. Whatever our role, we all are in this together! It is vital that injured parties be promptly treated and then helped to be restored to contributing members of our workforce. In today’s fast paced, overworked, under-staffed workplace - every employee’s contribution is needed and should be valued.

So, what do we then do? First, be proactive in doing the things we know work: hazard awareness, task specific training, provision and use of PPE. Then; let’s take seriously the need for thorough and complete investigations. Ones that lead to concrete action items that are researched, tried, and **acted** upon. **Someone must be held accountable for implementing the corrective action in a reasonable time.** No one deserves to be shunned as a leper in today’s workplace! Vigorous treatments are available!