



June 30 — The Hazard Everyone Walked Past

A machine was left on and was beginning to overheat potentially posing a fire hazard. Several workers had been near the machine but apparently didn't notice it.

I turned off the machine and reported to the supervisor. He included the issue in his morning meeting the next day.

Sometimes the biggest hazards aren't the ones we can't see.

They're the ones we've seen so many times that we stop noticing them.

An employee observed a machine that had been left running and was beginning to overheat, creating the potential for a fire. Several employees had been working near the machine throughout the day, but no one had recognized the developing hazard.

The employee immediately shut the machine down and reported the condition to a supervisor. The concern was serious enough that it was discussed during the next morning's meeting to help raise awareness and prevent similar situations in the future.

This observation highlights an important challenge in the workplace. The longer we are around equipment, the easier it becomes to overlook subtle changes in its condition. An unusual sound, excessive heat, a strange odor, or abnormal operation may not stand out when we are focused on our work or passing through an area as part of our daily routine.

The machine didn't suddenly become a hazard when it started overheating. The warning signs were likely developing over time. The difference is that one employee noticed something that others had walked past and took action before the situation escalated.

Many incidents occur not because people fail to care, but because familiarity causes hazards to blend into the background. When we see the same equipment every day, it's easy to assume everything is operating normally unless there is an obvious problem.

This employee challenged that assumption, trusted what they observed, and prevented a potential fire hazard from becoming something much more serious.

Hazards

- Fire hazards
- Equipment overheating
- Property damage
- Unexpected equipment failure
- Smoke exposure
- Loss of situational awareness

Words of Wisdom

Pay attention to changes in your work environment. Equipment often provides warning signs before a failure occurs. Recognizing those signs early can prevent injuries, damage, and unplanned downtime.

Pause and Think

- What warning signs might indicate equipment is beginning to overheat?
- Have you ever noticed a condition that others had walked past without recognizing?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to spot hazards in familiar work areas?
- What should you do if equipment is operating differently than normal?
- How can crews help each other identify conditions that may be easy to overlook?
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Closing Thought

Hazards don't become dangerous when they appear. They become dangerous when nobody notices them.