



June 5 — Don't Walk Past It

While inspecting the Dry Corn Hopper IEP system, we observed that the siding on the NW corner of the platform was entirely missing, whether from windstorm or interrupted repair was unknown. There was absolutely nothing warning, much less preventing an individual from approaching within 6 feet of the edge and plummeting 115 feet to the truck-lane below. The gap was 6 feet wide. The only protection from a fall was a horizontal girder at 4 feet height with absolutely nothing below it.

We were not able to reach anyone on the radio. (There was a power outage at the time and foremen were occupied with other emergencies). We then returned to the office and continued to call the General Foreman by radio or phone until he answered, and we informed him of the hazard. He immediately went to inspect it.

Most serious hazards don't announce themselves. There's no alarm. No flashing light. No warning telling you to stop.

During an inspection of the Dry Corn Hopper IEP system, an employee discovered that an entire section of siding on the northwest corner platform was missing. The opening was approximately six feet wide, with a drop of nearly 115 feet to the truck lane below. Aside from a horizontal girder, there was nothing preventing someone from approaching the edge and falling.

The situation was made more challenging by a power outage. Radio communication was difficult, and supervisors were occupied responding to other issues across the facility. It would have been easy to assume someone else would eventually find the problem or to move on to the next task.

Instead, the employee continued trying to make contact. After returning to the office and repeatedly attempting to reach supervision by radio and phone, they were finally able to notify the General Foreman, who immediately responded to investigate the hazard.

This observation highlights an important reality about safety. Sometimes the hardest part isn't recognizing the hazard—it's taking ownership of it.

When distractions, competing priorities, or unusual conditions exist, there can be a temptation to assume someone else will handle the problem. Unfortunately, serious incidents often occur when everyone assumes someone else is taking action.

The employee in this situation didn't walk past the hazard. They didn't stop after the first unsuccessful phone call. They stayed engaged until the right people were informed and action could be taken.

That's how injuries are prevented.

Hazards

- Fall from elevation
- Fatal fall exposure
- Missing fall protection
- Trip hazards near the opening
- Delayed hazard correction.

Words of Wisdom

Identifying a hazard is only the first step. The job isn't complete until the hazard is communicated and the appropriate actions are taken to protect others.

Pause and Think

- What would you do if you discovered a serious hazard and couldn't immediately reach a supervisor?
- Have you ever assumed someone else would report or correct a problem?
- How can distractions or unusual events make hazard recognition more difficult?
- What hazards in your area could have serious consequences if left unreported?
- What does ownership of safety look like in your work area?

Closing Thought

Seeing a hazard is important. Making sure something gets done about it is what makes the difference.