

City of Saint Paul Labor Management Safety Committee

October 27th, 2010 Safety Message

HORSEPLAY VS. HUMOR AT WORK

Horseplay and humor. Two words that sometimes people take to mean the same thing. When these words are used in the context of a workplace – significant differences arise.

Horseplay is defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary as rough or boisterous play. That definition in and of itself is not dangerous.

Most everyone engaged in some horseplay as a child. Most of the time no one was hurt and no property was damaged. When horseplay occurs in a work environment where normal work-related hazards exist, an immediate risk can present itself to other employees and an injury could occur quickly.

Humor has many definitions in the dictionary. One set is *a* : that quality which appeals to a sense of the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous *b* : the mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous *c* : something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing.

Humor is usually a welcome relief to employees during a work day filled with time pressures, budgetary demands, and dead lines. Provided that humor does not come at the expense of anyone person, it is usually welcome and accepted in the workplace. In the past there have been concerns about the content or intent of a joke or humorous story, and the City of Saint Paul and Saint Paul Regional Water Services takes any complaints seriously, but humor itself does not usually raise any *safety* concerns in the workplace.

Management wants to remind all employees that horseplay is not encouraged, allowed or tolerated in the workplace. The act itself poses a significant risk to yourself and your fellow employees. Management will intervene as quickly as possible.

Take responsibility for your safe workplace! Report all horseplay activity to your manager or supervisor! Be safe and stay alert!