

Toxic

Summer of 2022 is almost over. Students are back in school and we will soon see another year go by. 2023 is going to be an important year as our 6-year contract comes to an end in March 2023 and we start negotiation for another contract. If we stick together in solidarity and support our bargaining team, we will be successful together.

Another UAW assembler at KK was injured performing his job and managements answer was to retaliate by giving the employee a verbal warning for not reporting the unsafe issue earlier. Now let's back up a little and fill in some key factors:

1. The assembler was trained to do the job the same way as all the assemblers that performed the job.
2. The assembler informed his supervisor that the job was hard on his body and wanted to move out of the position.
3. The Manufacturing Engineer, Team leads and Supervisor were all aware the assemblers were performing a task that was not on standard work because of a supplier torquing issue.
4. A Company safety investigation was done, the process was changed and several weeks had passed but when the injury became a recordable and the assembler was reprimanded.

During a Company safety investigation, the injured employee is asked to fill out a questionnaire about the accident. One of the questions asked: ***if there is anything that the employee could have done to prevent the accident.*** This is a trap enforced by the company to place blame. It is a fact the trauma from an injury can cause guilt, anxiety, and stress, a form of PTSD. An injured individual experiencing strong emotions from an injury feels fault:

- "If only I'd left work a few minutes earlier."
- "I should have said something sooner."
- "I should have seen that he was coming for me."
- "Why wasn't I more careful?"

It's easy to use the advantage of hindsight to see the "mistakes" we made. In reality, we almost certainly overstate our own responsibility for the traumatic event, and as a result feel unnecessary guilt. All the same, it's a common response after a trauma. It is toxic and dishonest for management to use it for disciplinary action. **Values in action**

Another Safety issue in another part of building a UAW member who has had previous back surgery was asked to run an autoloader machine that has to be hand loaded because management has made no effort to fix the autoloader in four years. The weight of the parts going into machine are over the lifting requirements set by standard work. Because the autoloader is not operational, the area has been poorly modified to hand load oily parts without a hoist to where the operator has to stretch up to 3 feet to place parts. The UAW member reported this to his supervisor whose response was that it was not a safety issue because all other shifts are doing it and they are not complaining.

If you look at both of these incidents, the hazards were there in the open and could be identified but because management has given up on identifying hazards and choses a more aggressive approach of

placing blame and pitting employees against each other to keep the line producing only produces a workplace with a toxic environment of fear.

Don't fall into Managements trap. When you see a hazard, report it to your Supervisor, **Not a team lead**, they are part of the trap. Ask for a UAW safety representative; if one is not available ask for your steward. If you are involved in an accident, tell the truth but be careful of the statement you give and what you say. Every word will be used against you. If you go into a meeting with management for any reason and feel that any Disciplinary or adverse action is being taken, invoke your Weingarten Rights immediately.

Loren Meyers
Plantwide Safety Chairman