

I'm sure most of you already know about the high number of injuries we had recently pertaining to safety. Not only are more and more of our friends and co-workers getting hurt, the severity level of these injuries are climbing as well. An increase in severity is common as the number of people getting hurt increases. I know everyone is carrying a heavy load. The contract talks are taking its toll on all of us as well as our families. As if the tension from negotiations isn't enough, we tend to let our minds drift this time of the year as we're all anxious to get outside and enjoy the weather.

I'm writing this in hopes of getting everyone to stop for a minute and look around you. Are you performing your job to the safest extent that you can? What about your co-workers and friends, are they working safe? Please keep an eye on each other. I can guarantee you that there are people waiting for you, and are depending on your coming home in the same condition in which you left. Think about your families, friends, or better yet, those grand kids, before you take a chance or a short cut. These people need you. Remember what I said in the beginning of this article, the more people that get hurt, the higher the severity rate climbs and before you know it, someone dies on the job. I'm not talking trash, it happens 14 times every day throughout the United States. Don't become a statistic!

Next Wednesday is workers memorial day. We are planning a union driven safety awareness day with special attention to Rodney "Rudy" Goodchild again. You can expect to see a group of union folks on the far side of the bridge handing out goodies and reminding everyone about the seriousness of working safe and how easily your name could be on next year's list.

Speaking of safety, there is something I need to bring to your attention. I attended a meeting on Monday with Aaron Gundrum, Dan Diers and Terry Soderman. The topic was safety meetings and the issue is that they are not being attended. Just to give you an idea of the magnitude of this problem, in February alone there were approximately 125 people that didn't attend their safety meeting AND failed to make it up. The March reports are not final yet but they are [looking](#) even worse. For some reason, the company has been forgiving in following through with progressive discipline for this and that is why I'm writing about this; because they are going to be watching this more closely and will be handing out discipline in accordance with the safety agreement. The attendance has gotten so low that it could become a compliance issue as many topics covered during these meetings are mandatory issues set down by OSHA. Remember, safety meetings are mandatory and if you must miss one, you need to make it up or discipline will be handed out. Below is a copy of the rules surrounding safety meetings. These rules have been in effect since 2004. I'm bringing this to your attention to hopefully avoid any discipline.

*The following expectations have been set for safety meetings. They will be administered consistently across the mill.*

- 1. All employees must attend a monthly safety meeting. Each employee will sign the sign-in sheet to document attendance.*
- 2. For shift workers, the decision on when to schedule the safety meeting will be made by the General Superintendent. For day workers, the meetings will be part of their normal scheduled work activities.*
- 3. If someone has approval not to attend their regularly scheduled meeting, because of illness, vacation, work schedule, or other circumstance they need to make up that meeting. The make-up may occur before the regularly scheduled meeting or by the end to the calendar month following the missed meeting.*
- 4. It is the department's responsibility to track attendance and notify those that missed the meeting via posting a copy of the regularly scheduled safety meeting attendance sheet in a central area within the department after the conclusion of the meeting. It is the employee's responsibility to assure that they have made up the missed meeting.*
- 5. Making up a meeting will consist of, as a minimum, viewing the Prepared Resource Packet materials and reviewing the completed Safety Meeting Leaders guide. Areas can establish additional requirements as they deem necessary.*
- 6. If someone chooses not to follow these expectations, missing safety meetings will be dealt with as a performance issue. Progressive discipline will be used as specified in "Misconduct Rule 30 - Failure to attend a safety meeting as outlined under the Safety Meeting Attendance Guidelines".*