

## **Examining an Employee's Safety Compliance**

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HRM 3400

22 November 2022

*Keywords:* personal protective equipment, workplace injury, safety compliance

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### **Background About the Organization**

Handyman Warehouse is a home improvement retailer store operating in Ontario. This organization has approximately 150 employees in various divisions, such as lighting, appliances, gardening, tools, lumber and plumbing, to name a few. Each division has a manager known as the leader. The management team consists of the store leader, the assistant leader, the scheduling leader, and the human resource leader. The employees work various shifts as early as six in the morning to nine at night.

The day to day activities depend on the division but involve helping customers, assisting with retrieval of merchandise, assembling customer orders, stocking the shelves and operating machinery. In the lumber and plumbing divisions, employees are trained to operate machinery that can cut material in order to fulfill specific customer orders. Every employee is required to wear a form of safety equipment. For example, every employee must wear safety shoes, regardless of which division they work in. Employees handling lumber and other potentially sharp material must wear proper safety gloves.

### **Description of the Incident**

Sara Miller is one of the machine operators for the company. She works in the lumber division stocking shelves, gathering customer orders, and cutting wood to specialised sizes. She is 38 years old and has been working at Handyman Warehouse for 10 years. She has recently been having an increase of workplace injuries over the past few months. Coworkers have noticed that Sara has not been wearing the proper safety equipment when operating heavy machinery. For example, they have seen her at times without gloves, safety shoes or safety glasses while operating machinery. She has been complaining of increased pain while working with previous injuries, most recently she has had material fall on her foot while working.

In the past, Sara has often been reminded to put on her safety shoes while at work. One afternoon, Jenny, a fellow employee, noticed Sara was not wearing safety shoes as she was about to lift a large piece of wood. Jenny stopped Sara and asked where her safety shoes were. Sara replied, "Oh, I forgot to change into them this morning." On another shift, Sara came into the employee break room holding a tissue over her right hand. She was handling material without safety gloves on and cut her palm. Travis, the store's first aid leader, assisted

her to clean and cover the cut. He then filled out an incident report and asked Sara why she wasn't wearing proper safety gloves. Again, Sara replied that she forgot she needed to put them on.

Sara's division leader, John, has been made aware of Sara's increase in workplace injuries. John is aware that the nature of Sara's role puts her at an increased risk for these types of injuries, however, he also knows that Sara was properly trained in the use and purpose of proper safety equipment upon her hire. Jenny and Travis both spoke to John about their concerns for Sara's safety at work. Jenny told John that Sara has been under increased stress at home and she is worried that this added stress may be contributing to her injuries.

John isn't sure what he should do; he feels that Sara should know what to do because she was trained to do so, and other employees do not seem to forget the safety equipment as much as Sara does. However, John values Sara as an employee as she never misses a shift and often comes in on short notice when a shift needs to be covered. John also sympathises with the information Jenny shared with him about Sara's stress; he can understand how this may affect her work performance. In spite of that, John feels that it is just a matter of time until Sara's behaviour leads to a more serious injury. John decides he should have a meeting with the human resource leader and the store leader regarding his concerns and what to do next.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are some strategies Sara could implement to overcome her barriers in the workplace?
2. Are safety compliance and safety participation the main factors that ensure the prevention of workplace injuries? Why? Why not?
3. What might happen if the safety concerns for Sara are not properly addressed? Who and how will they be affected by her actions?
4. If you were a part of the management team at Handyman Warehouse, how would you implement an environment that promotes safety and prevents workplace injuries?
5. Develop a plan to address John's concerns for Sara. Include strategies to address her forgetfulness and her stress levels along with preventing injuries and promoting safety in her duties.