



Did You Hurt Yourself More When You Were Younger?

by Larry Wilson

equipment or car doing something unexpected. The normal positive response has been about 2 to 5 percent. Then I asked how many times the “other guy” doing something unexpected was a factor. The normal positive response has been 5 to 15 percent. But for both of these questions, most people could think of only one example. What’s left is the “self area” (see figure below).

People get hurt on a fairly regular basis. And we’ve been doing it all of our lives. Young children get hurt 15 to 25 times per week. That’s 5,000 injuries you can barely remember. Many of them were minimal, to be sure. Unfortunately, some were a bit more serious, where a kiss and a Band - Aid® weren’t enough.

Children ages 5 to 12 don’t get hurt quite as often - maybe only 2 to 4 times per week.

That’s still another 1,000 injuries or so.

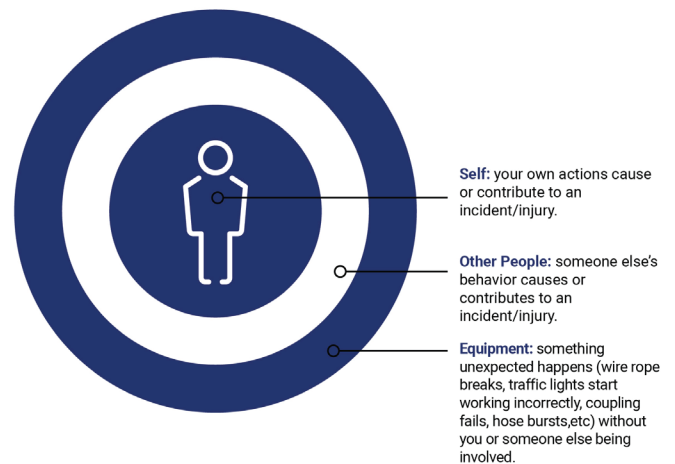
As kids grow older, the injuries continue.

So, before high school is over, most people have already experienced 6,000 - 7,000 unintentional injuries.

Hopefully as an adult, you are not hurting yourself quite as often as when you were a child or in high school. Maybe you are down to one injury per week or maybe only one per month. But how many people do you know who never have a bruise or a cut for a whole year?

And again, not all of these injuries will be minimal. Some will be minor (sprains, stitches, second - degree burns, mild concussions, etc.), some will be major (fractures, dislocations, torn or severed ligaments, dismemberment, etc.) and some could be fatal. Some will happen on the road. Some will happen at home and, of course, some will happen at work.

During the last 20 plus years, I have asked more than 100,000 people in hundreds of different companies how many of their injuries were caused by the



In other words, if it wasn't “the equipment” or “the other guy” doing something unexpected to trigger the chain of events that led to your injury, then the unexpected source had to be “you.”

Did you intend to hurt yourself? Not likely!

So it must have been an error, miscalculation, misjudgment, etc. on your part that triggered the chain of events.

Not that this is new to parents of small children. When your child comes up the stairs crying, most parents ask, “Oh, did you hurt yourself?” Quite often you don't even have to ask because the child is already volunteering it:

“[Sob, sob]...I hurt myself... [wail, wail].”

Imagine asking an experienced tradesman coming into the first aid room, “Oh, did you hurt yourself?” (Personally, I wouldn't recommend it.) Yet how many



As kids get older, they are exposed to increasing amounts of hazardous energy.

times would the source of the unexpected really be all that much different from the child's injury or the teenager's injury?

How many times do you think you would hear: "I didn't see it," "I wasn't thinking about it,"

"I got hit by something" or "I lost my balance, traction or grip"?

These four errors - eyes not on task, mind not on task, moving into the line - of - fire or losing balance, traction or grip (or some combination of them) - are contributing factors in more than 90% of all recordable injuries of an acute nature. If you go down a level on the pyramid to include bumps, bruises, scrapes and cuts, they are contributing factors in more than 95% of all injuries.

Obviously then, if more than 95% of all injuries are caused by our own mistakes, reducing human error or minimizing its negative effects is the name of the game.

Can you minimize human error? The simplest and most efficient way is to look at what human factors or

states cause all types of error - and to work on those states. That's what SafeStart is all about. It's not about blaming anyone. It's about helping people avoid making errors - errors that can lead to serious injuries.

What causes people to make these errors? Well, lots of things. But if you asked 100,000 people, the number one thing you would hear would be "rushing." You will also hear about fatigue, frustration and complacency. You might hear about other states as well, but can you think of an injury - not caused by "the equipment" or "the other guy" doing something unexpectedly - where you weren't rushing, you weren't frustrated, you weren't overly tired or you hadn't become so complacent with the hazards that you weren't even thinking about the risk anymore?

Now, can you think of a time when you've been injured - not caused by the equipment or the other guy doing something unexpectedly - where you were actually looking at what you were doing, thinking about what you were doing, aware of the line - of - fire and conscious of losing your balance, traction or grip?

In other words, one of these 4 states:

- rushing
- frustration
- fatigue
- complacency...

...cause or contribute to one or more of these

4 errors:

- eyes not on task
- mind not on task
- line - of - fire
- balance, traction, grip.

SafeStart will not only help you recognize these state - to - error patterns, but it will also help you learn critical error reduction techniques which can keep you safer at work, at home and on the road.



About the Author

Larry Wilson has been a behaviour-based safety consultant for over 25 years. He has worked with over 3,500 companies in Canada, the United States, Latin America, the Pacific Rim and Europe. He is also the author of SafeStart, an advanced safety awareness programme currently being used by over 4,000,000 people in over 60 countries, and available in more than 30 languages.