FAIL SAFE
IMPROVE SAFETY
2023 ACP WORKFORCE
SAFETY CAMPAIGN

Overconfidence

The term "overconfidence" is used as a description for numerous different scenarios, but the word is typically used to describe the mindset of an induvial that believes they can perform a task with no chance of making an error. While we can all think of a time when someone we know (or even ourselves) has been overconfident, this attitude and perspective on a jobsite can have catastrophic effects.

Photo credit: AES

An easy example of overconfidence is texting while operating a vehicle. Most companies have policies that restrict phone usage while driving or operating equipment, with immediate termination for employees that violate these rules. However, how often have you personally or have you witnessed someone that leaves a jobsite in their personal vehicle and is on their phone, or is texting while driving down the road off the site?

How often, while driving, might you check your phone? Use it for GPS navigation? Respond to that "urgent" text? Take a picture of something notable on the trip?

The reality is that most of us have and still do this, despite rules on jobsites, despite local laws or ordinances, and despite knowing the risks to ourselves and others. The prevailing human belief when risky behavior does not result in a negative consequence is "this won't happen to me". The more often the activity, in this case cell phone use while driving, is performed without consequence, the more overconfident we become.

Overconfidence can be a cognitive bias that impairs decision-making and performance in various aspects of life, including professional and personal domains. To mitigate overconfidence, there are several human performance tools and strategies you can employ:

Self-awareness: Encourage individuals to reflect on their past decisions and performance, paying particular attention to instances where overconfidence may have played a role in suboptimal outcomes. Promote a culture of self-awareness where people acknowledge their limitations and biases.

Feedback and peer review: Implement systems for regular feedback and peer review. Encourage team members to challenge each other's assumptions and decisions constructively. Constructive criticism can help individuals see their blind spots and reduce overconfidence.

Remember that no single tool or strategy can completely eliminate overconfidence, but a combination of these approaches can help mitigate its effects and improve decision-making within an organization or among individuals.

How many other examples of your own personal overconfidence can you come up with?

What examples of overconfidence have you witnessed at work?

What steps are you willing to take to address your own personal overconfidence?

What additional steps will you take to address overconfidence at work?

AMERICAN CLEAN POWER