Don’t Just Stand There – Learn First Aid and Help

Safety Talk

An injured worker needs care now – can you administer it? Proper training, supplies and equipment are essential for providing prompt care to injured workers. If you have ever been faced with an injury, no matter how small, you will probably know the value of first aid.

What’s at Stake

Research reveals:

- Approximately two-thirds of people (59%) wouldn’t feel confident enough to try to save a life
- Approximately a quarter (24%) would do nothing and wait for an ambulance to arrive or hope that a passer-by knows first aid.

Applying first aid can range from cleaning a simple cut on a finger to performing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on a heart attack victim. First aid is the initial assistance given to a person until medical help arrives. In the first critical minutes of a serious accident or illness, you can lessen the effects of the injuries or save a life.

Whether you learn first aid to treat a minor injury or assist at an accident scene, it is a very useful skill. Various courses of different skill levels are often available through employers, community organizations or first aid schools.

What Can Go Wrong

A vehicle gently collides with a forklift and the operator is thrown from his seat. He suffers no visible injuries except for bruising, but soon goes into cardiac arrest. Someone calls an ambulance, but none of his co-workers are trained in first aid, so no one attempts to administer CPR. He dies before paramedics arrive.

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Here are some basic guidelines for use in emergencies:

- Check the accident scene for fire, explosion, electrical and other hazards before entering it.
- Avoid general panic by staying calm yourself. Assign someone to summon help.

- Ask co-workers or bystanders to control crowds, traffic and direct emergency personnel to the scene. Always remain with the injured person. Only move the victim if he is in immediate danger from fire, explosion or other life-threatening hazards.
- Carefully examine the person for signs of breathing, consciousness, broken bones or bleeding.
- If the person has no pulse and you are able to perform CPR, do so.
- To help control heavy bleeding, remember the three P's: Position of the patient – level. Position of the wound – keep it higher than the heart. Pressure – using a clean cloth on the wound. If there is an object embedded in the wound, apply pressure on either side.
- Loosen restrictive clothing to assist the victim's breathing and blood circulation. If the victim is conscious, talk to him in a reassuring voice. If his injury is severe, try not discuss it with others or to let the victim see it because this can contribute to shock.
- Keep the person warm, calm and lying down to help prevent shock. However, some people will feel more comfortable in a sitting position if they are having trouble breathing.
- Only as a last resort, transport the victim to medical aid yourself.

Final Word

If you learn first aid, you may have the opportunity to save a life one day – maybe even your own.