

“Ain’t No Such Thing as an Accydent!” –Boss Hogg

Boss Hogg, the unethical county commissioner in the 1970’s television show, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, uttered many outrageous statements during each weekly episode. However, his belief about “accyidents” bears a strong element of truth especially as it applies to the workplace.

The very word “accident” is probably not appropriate when referring to workplace injuries because it suggests that these events are random and unpredictable. However, statistics compiled yearly since 1999 by workers’ compensation insurers and the Bureau of Labor Statistics attribute the root causes of most workplace injuries to several very preventable scenarios:

- **Overexertion** – strenuous pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying, holding or throwing.
- **Falls** – falling to the surface from the same level or to a lower level.
- **Bodily reaction** – strains, sprains and injuries caused not by falling but by free bodily motions such as bending, slipping, tripping, reaching or climbing.
- **Environmental** – setting the stage for injuries by improper lockout-tag out, slippery floors, failure to properly placard electrical and combustible hazards.
- **Struck by object** – includes objects falling onto, swinging into or otherwise colliding with unsuspecting workers
- **Confined space** – includes being trapped, compressed or suffering oxygen deprivation

In addition, human beings are subject to certain *attitudes* and *behaviors* that greatly increase the

chances for a workplace injury to occur. These include:

- **Ignoring safety procedures**
- **Overconfidence**
- **Taking “timesaving” shortcuts**
- **Operating with insufficient information**
- **Mental distractions**



According to investigators, the embarrassing “accident” pictured above was attributed to a flight crew attempting to taxi at night in heavy fog around an airport with complex, inter-connecting taxiways. Instead of consulting surface runway maps or asking ground control for “progressive guidance,” the crew opted to trust their memories and “save some time.” So clearly, the contributing factors included ignoring safety procedures; taking shortcuts; operating with insufficient information and most likely a heavy dose of overconfidence. The obvious environmental hazards (darkness, fog, fatigue) would not have been factors had the human element been more attentive!

Mental *distractions* include all the problems that your EAP can help you address such as family or relationship issues; legal or financial concerns; stress; depression; childcare and eldercare challenges; gambling or chemical addictions; anger and guilt to name but a few. Besides being painful in themselves, these conditions also reduce one’s job focus and concentration. We invite you to contact your EAP to reduce your pain and increase your workplace safety.