Safety and Maintenance Planning & Scheduling – What’s the Connection?

The tip of the month has a question in the title… *What does the Maintenance Planning and Scheduling (MPS) of Work have to do With Maintenance Technician Safety?* Many that are asked this question seem a little confused as to the proper answer and really don’t see the connection.

Let’s talk a little about safety first and then we will see how they are connected. The way I was trained years ago is that safety accidents are only caused by one of two things.

(1) An unsafe act - something that you do that you should have known better using your safety training or maybe just you experience and common sense (you know the thing which is not so common).

(2) An unsafe condition - Like there was no guard on the motor coupling and you didn’t know it was spinning 1750 rpm’s when you stuck your screw driver into it.

I personally think that most *unsafe conditions* are still very closely connected to *unsafe acts*, must take your own personal safety into you own hands. You must hold yourself accountable for something and not always blame the accident on someone or something besides yourself.

So let’s assume you agree with me on the accident causes above and let’s talked about how maintenance planning and scheduling can improve most organizations’ safety performance and record.

In "Mike’s World" any job or maintenance function can be completed with zero accidents if enough time and effort is placed into the work planning and scheduling process. The key to this process is to have a dedicated and a concerted effort that requires someone to take the time to completely plan and schedule the work. By this I mean someone takes the following steps to prepare the work:

1. Completely understand the work request
2. Discuss the schedule for the work
3. Visit the job site
4. Take notes and pictures as needed
5. Document all job steps (if expert assistance is needed, request it now)
6. Complete a Job Safety Analysis which identifies all potential safety conditions and acts
7. List all hazards and spell out all special safety equipment tools
8. Review job safety steps and conditions with others like safety managers and even the technician expected to complete the work

A few other things to keep in mind as it relates to safety and the MPS process are

- **The right parts for the job.**
  Parts are very important because when you have redesign of improvise during the work process more safety events happen. Most of you that have followed my tips of the month have heard me tell stories about my two fictional (not really fictional) maintenance employees, “Bubba” and “Skeeter”. When Bubba says to Skeeter, go get the big hammer we can make this part fit we all know what is likely to happen next. So the right part for the job is very important.

- **Performing work tasks in the proper order.**
  Performing the work tasks in the proper order is also key to a successful and safe job. We don’t want to remove all of the lug nuts from the flat tire before we begin the task of jacking up the car. We all know how that will turn out.

- **Scheduling the event for the best time of the day or week.** And lastly, the scheduling of when we want to perform the work request is critical as well. Work that is done in a reactive mode always has a higher occurrence of accidents. The faster we move to make a repair the less time there is available to think through the complete process which includes looking for potential safety concerns.

So remember, slow down a little, take time to think all maintenance jobs through asking yourself:

- What parts do I need?
- What tools do I need?
- What safety equipment do I need?
- What help do I need?
- And, When is the best time to perform the work

Remember in the maintenance world stuff happens. Try to be as prepared as possible and do it right and safely the first time.