

### What is Horseplay?

Horseplay is rough or rowdy play or pranks that occur at the workplace. Horseplay can be activities such as joking that includes physical contact, playing around, racing, grabbing, foolish vehicle operation, social pressure to participate in unsafe acts, harassment, and unauthorized contests. Often workplace horseplay incidents go unnoticed or are ignored as harmless fun. However, making horseplay a part of your workday may jeopardize your health and can lead to serious or deadly injuries.

Each year there are hundreds of injuries in the United States from pranks at work. Workplace horseplay incidents may lead to serious injuries at work, divide the workplace, and prevent employees from getting their jobs done. In some states, horseplay that results in injury can result in criminal prosecution. Courts have held that these injuries are not the result of an accident but are deliberate acts.

### Example of the Dangers of Horseplay

Did you know fooling around with air hoses has caused many cases of ruptured eardrums and ruptured bowels?

- A blast of air under 40 pounds per square inch (psi) of pressure from 4 inches away can rupture bowels or eardrums and cause brain damage.
- As little as 12 psi can pop an eyeball from its socket.
- Air can enter the navel, even through a layer of clothing, and inflate and rupture the intestines.
- If directed at the mouth, compressed air can rupture the lungs.

### How Horseplay Affects the Workplace

When practical jokes are common in the workplace, it's hard to pay attention to your job because you're always on the lookout for the next joke. Horseplay is a safety hazard that can quickly get out of hand and lead to injury or death. If someone else gets hurt as a result of your horseplay or joke, you may be liable for damages and you'll risk losing your job. Even if a practical joke isn't dangerous in itself, it can result in humiliation, embarrassment, anger, hurt feelings, distrust and even a desire for revenge.

### How Can You Prevent Horseplay in the Workplace?

- Don't initiate it and don't get pressured into participating in it.
- Avoid being distracted at work.
- If you see someone behaving in an unprofessional or unsafe way at work, report it to a supervisor.
- Follow instructions and obey the safety rules designed for your protection.

### Employee Responsibility

- Do not engage or participate in any type of unsafe behavior or acts.
- Follow all regulations and work rules to ensure the safety of individuals or other employees.
- Ensure protective equipment is used properly and operating machinery is in good repair and does not present a hazard to employees

**Supervisors and Management Responsibility** – It is management's responsibility to ensure all employees have access to a safe, respectful, and harassment free place to work.

- Provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees.
- Take all precautions necessary to protect the safety and health of employees.
- Ensure that employees understand and follow company operating practices and safety procedures.

**Remember: Hindsight explains the injury that foresight would have prevented!**