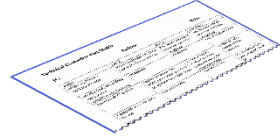


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Hed: The Technical Counselor Visit: Safety

Byline: Lisa Turner

Excerpt: “Without safety awareness and practice, an accident is waiting to happen.”

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In the last article we talked about human factors. By listening more than talking, you will discover some of the hidden pain points that could derail the project. Then be creative and positive as you discuss solutions. Human factors can be complicated, and require patience on the part of the TC. This month let’s talk about safety, also a topic that can be complex, but probably a lot easier to discuss with your builder. Or not!

Without safety awareness and practice, an accident is waiting to happen. Since none of us like to be lectured (“Stop running with those scissors!”), ease into the safety discussion with your builder by asking them a few questions.

“Have you had a bad accident in your workshop? If so, what caused it?”

The builder is likely to relate an accident they’ve had and how it happened. Some emotion may flood in to the story. As you listen, assess how your builder feels about safety practices. This emotional component is key. If the builder connects safety awareness with the emotion they felt in that moment, then there’s a good chance they will be more conscientious in the future.

When we’re younger we take more risks, lacking the experience that helps us understand what can go wrong. The accidents we’ve encountered help us modify future behavior, but it’s always better to avoid the accidents in the first place.

Tell some of your own stories; we all have one. Then cover safety practices in general – use the lists in the build manual, and any other checklists you have. Make sure you cover the following items.

Walking into things. We all do it. It’s a combination of thinking of something else and not looking where we are going. In a hangar or garage there are plenty of opportunities to hit our head or trip over something. Prevent this by making a rule to “be in the moment” when navigating the shop, and arranging things for safety and visibility. Hang ribbons on items that are just above eye level.

Read the fine print. Encourage the builder to read all of the instructions that come with components, chemicals, and tools. It only takes a minute and can make a critical difference.

What if? Attitude. Ask the builder to think actions through. “What if I start the engine for the first time and the tail is not tied down?”

Eye and facial injuries. These are serious. Ask the builder to review jobs that could cause eye injury and wear goggles or other full-face protection. It’s worth it to get items that fit and are comfortable; otherwise the builder won’t use them.

Ladders and stepstools. We use these all the time but we can easily lose our balance if we’re not paying attention. Store them when not in use.

Slow injuries. These include loss of hearing, exposure to carcinogenic chemicals, and lung damage. Encourage your builder to wear earplugs, eye protection, and a mask when working with loud tools, and sanding or spot painting. Paint booth work requires a full suit with an air supply.

Get your builder thinking ahead on safety topics. Make sure the following items are on the list.

- ✓ Take your time on a job; rushing will only slow you down in the end
- ✓ Get training on tools and techniques
- ✓ Use protective equipment
- ✓ Think ahead
- ✓ Read and have Safety Data Sheets (SDS) on hand for chemicals
- ✓ Consider special topics, like propellers

I still see builders and mechanics flout critical safety practices in the interest of saving time. Their earplugs are on the bench across the room. “This one time it will be fine.” But every time we take a safety shortcut it could bite us. Cumulative “bites” take chunks out, and then we wonder why we can’t hear or catch our breath. Your efforts on safety training and awareness will go a long way in protecting your builder over the long haul.