



Not just safety rules, but fines?

by Todd Turner, ATP Results, www.ATPResults.com

Let me say from the get-go that I'm all for safety. I design both my chemicals and processes first and foremost with regards to worker safety. In over 30 years, I've only had one workers comp claim and that was back when we were doing hydroblasting at 10,000 psi. A guy jammed his thumb while working on a pump. My foreman rightly took him to the ER for them to check it out. As it turned out, the worker didn't even lose his thumbnail. No followup visit required.

I'm all for safety and then some. When the job called for using a pretty nasty acid, I put the slicker suit on and did that job myself. I didn't feel comfortable giving the task over to a regular worker. That is, until I redesigned the chemical and now don't even need a slicker suit.

This year, International Paper's Red River Mill in Campti, Louisiana, is implementing worker fines for safety violations. I always thought of this mill as having a really proactive safety department. Nice folks but firm. Well, they have ratcheted it up a notch with this. I guess it makes sense. If OSHA is going to fine IP for safety violations for anything that takes place on their site, they'd might as well get a jump on the process.

Let's see, what kind of fines are we talking about?

- Smoking in a non-smoking area.... \$600
- Failure to correct PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)... \$600
- Improper barricading... \$600
- Walking and talking on a cell phone...\$600

This begs the question, do they double the fine if you're trying to walk and talk AND chew gum at the same time?

- There are a few more such as going over the 5mph speed limit... \$1000
- Lock Out/Tag Out violation (not locking or letting somebody else lock out for you)... \$1500
- Confined Space Entry Violation... \$2000.

Ouch!

But guess what?

I've already seen the impact. One of my workers was talking about how he just can't handle wearing ear plugs. It makes him feel "confined." I told him I want to hear when I'm older so I wear them. Then I read aloud this list. When it got to the \$600 fine for not correcting the PPE issues, I mentioned that his choosing not to wear ear plugs could cost him big bucks!

The look on his face! Priceless.

These fines don't really scare me because I already follow the rules... and then some. But, I've already seen a difference in someone who knows the rules (ear plugs) but chooses to ignore them. With a wife and four kids back home to feed, he'll be wearing his ear plugs.

For me, the biggest challenge will be keeping my truck down to 5mph. I can't afford a thousand dollar speeding ticket! Even with the slow speed limit, this is one of my favorite mills to work in. Nice folks and a helpful work attitude.

Todd Turner is the owner of ATP Results in El Dorado, Arkansas. Since 1976, ATP Results has helped heavy industry in a variety of specialty cleaning applications. To learn more, visit www.ATPResults.com.

