



Complacency: A Literal Killer



Webster's Dictionary defines complacency as: self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies. Complacency is perhaps one of the biggest problems we face in completing our day-to-day tasks. We are "used" to things being a certain way each time and unless the obvious comes right out and hits us. We can be oblivious to it all. This state of mind can affect many things such as productivity, quality, and safety. .

*Confidence comes
not from always
being right but from
not fearing to be
wrong.*

Peter T. McIntyre

Consider this example: It deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a word are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a total mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

You probably didn't have much trouble reading that paragraph. It probably took you back at first, but then you were able to zip right through the text and understand the content. This is an example of how complacency works with our mind. We get used to words starting with certain letters and being a certain length and we skip right over it "thinking" we know what the word is. In reading paragraphs it's not a big deal. However when it comes to safety, complacency can be a literal "killer" on the job.



Our brains are programmed to make repetitive tasks easier by identifying similar situations to those encountered in the past and applying a solution based on experience. This works well mostly, until something changes in the process. Each moment we are working with hazardous energy, whether it be a large production machine, forklift, automobile, power tools, electricity, or even walking from one end of the facility to the other, we must keep focused on the task at hand. There is much danger in going into “autopilot” when working on the job.

All too often we don’t realize how complacent we are until we have a near miss or close call. Those events tend to jump start our hearts and focus our attention, at least for a little while, on the task at hand. One technique found to be effective in battling complacency in your own actions is to watch the actions of other while they work. This has a two-fold effect in that it raises your awareness as you examine the actions of a co-worker as they are working and it may raise your co-worker’s awareness if you share with them some of the observations you made that would allow them to do their job in a safer manner. It can be a win-win. Use this technique today as you are working and feel yourself going into the complacent state of autopilot. You’ll find it truly can work well for everyone.

