



“Just This Once” Causes Accidents



Whenever there's an accident, whether the result is a fatality or a broken plate or anything in between, someone is sure to ask: "How did it happen?" The answer should always be the same: "It didn't happen; it was caused." And it's almost always possible to trace it back to someone—or several people—who fell down on their job somewhere along the line. Either they did something they shouldn't have done, or they failed to do something they should have done. Accidents don't "just happen," they are caused by the actions or inactions of one or more people.

The good thing is that just as people cause accidents to happen, they can prevent them from happening. That's the reason for the safe work practices we have established and safety procedures we utilize.

At the end of the day, we must believe that accidents don't just happen and must be committed to preventing them through our own actions.

It's why we have regular training sessions to inform and remind us to keep ourselves and our co-workers safe. It's the reason we provide personal protective equipment that can help keep a potential hazard from causing actual harm. But no work practices, rules, training, or equipment can prevent an accident from happening. We do that. We follow the lockout-tag out procedure; we leave machine guards in place; we tag and report a damaged tool or wire; we wear our safety glasses and hard hat. Some of us have special responsibilities that have an effect on everyone's safety. A maintenance supervisor, for example, has to do his or her job correctly or mechanical failures could be followed by accidents. The operations supervisor must inform and train workers in any changes in procedure and so on.



But for the most part, our own safe behavior is our own greatest safeguard. Remember that when we're tempted to take a shortcut or break the safety rule "just this once" or "just for a minute." That one minute could be exactly when the accident doesn't "happen" but is caused. Richard L. Evans wrote this about "Just this once." There is in our language a dangerously disarming phrase by which people often persuade other people to compromise principles. It is the phrase, "Just this once." "Just this once" has a siren-like lure. It is the forerunner of the phrase "Just once more." It is the beckoning voice of a false friend that leads us from safety to a false position, first "Just this once," and then "Just once more." "Just once more won't matter." "Just once more, and then I'll quit."

So, we sometimes move from one false step to another, often deluding ourselves into thinking that **this is the last time**. In some social and personal matters, many of us live somewhat this way. We may know, for example, that we are living our lives at a pace we cannot keep up, but we hate to refuse a friend. Thus, we are led from obligation to obligation, and each time we say "yes," we tell ourselves that we are saying it. "Just this once" and that tomorrow will be better. But tomorrow is seldom better except as we have the backbone to make it better. In matters of eating and appetite, people often go from one indulgence to another, always saying to themselves, "Just this once.....Tomorrow I begin to diet." "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow." "Just this once" becomes especially serious when people persuade other people that a principle is a matter of frequency rather than a clear-cut matter of right or wrong. It is true that a one-time offender is looked upon with more leniency than a frequent offender. But stealing "Just this once," lying "Just this once," deceiving "Just this once," or any other act of immorality urged upon anyone "Just this once" is a dangerous doctrine. "Just this once" is a long step, but "Just once more" is an easier step, and so men often forget their own fetters from link to link. If it isn't right, let it alone.

*"You can hear a lot –
just by listening."*

Eric Allenbaugh

Don't do "Just this once" what shouldn't be done at all. When we act in a manner to put ourselves and others at risk, not only are we taking a chance but we are demonstrating clearly that we lack moral responsibility. Why then would we operate a vehicle at high speed, overtaking a line of traffic and, at the same time our family members and ourselves are being put at risk. Or why would we know that a tool or equipment is defective and do no report or fix it, yet we use the equipment or we are aware that someone will use the equipment. Or why would we see a co-worker break a safety rule and turn a blind eye.

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