

“Thurb’s Blurbs”: Sharing Safety With the Masses

Hazards are ever-present in the steel plant environment, and a heightened awareness and emphasis on safety is a necessary priority for our industry. This monthly column, coordinated by members of the AIST Safety & Health Technology Committee, focuses on procedures and practices to promote a safe working environment for everyone.



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Comments are welcome.

If you have questions about this topic or other safety issues, please contact safetyfirst@aist.org.

Please include your full name, company name, mailing address and email in all correspondence.

In this world of danger and distractions, I enjoy bringing my team (family, friends and facility) together with a brief daily thought or two about life and safety. After all, our attitudes, awareness and actions have the power to make us heroes or zeros ... it's our choice!

When first asked to write an article about my daily safety messages, I wasn't 100% certain how to begin. Then as the weeks went by and the reminders from Pat Philbin of AIST continued, I knew I had to get something together. Hopefully, this article will help get our proverbial “safety juices” flowing in a way that creates awareness and recognizable behavioral changes. After all, we're in this together!

History

I began writing “Thurb’s Blurbs” for myself as part of my daily devotions back in 2005 and never imagined sharing them with anyone else at that time. They were several paragraphs long and I'd write them to better understand a topic or idea. I began sharing them with a small group of colleagues in 2006 and I received some feedback that they were good, but “just too long.” So, I trimmed them back to the one or two paragraphs they are today. They are meant to be elementary, quick to read and relational. The truth is, people don't always read long articles. No offense meant to the “long article writers of the world” — these just aren't meant to be those.

The name “Thurb’s Blurbs” came from an attorney friend of mine who jokingly called them that after I had added her to the distribution list many years ago.

Distribution

The list just keeps growing. From its humble beginnings of maybe 20 safety professionals, to my family and a few close friends, it has grown to reach in excess of 20,000 people daily. It's actually hard to know an exact number for sure, since countless recipients share it throughout their circles of influence and companies as well. By design, it's meant to be reviewed, edited to everyone's personal needs and shared without any concern of copyright or plagiarism. It really doesn't matter to me who uses it — as long as it helps others! I receive names to add to the distribution almost every week. I even get requests from people I didn't even know received it. My favorite ones are those who edit them and then copy me on their distributions of the same. I even receive some edited and/or customized weeks after I had originally penned them.

Frequency and Timing

I write one every single morning at home, on vacation or at work, 365 days a year. I write them based on whatever thought I may have at the moment or maybe in relation to something someone sent or shared with me previously. I usually write them while having a cup of coffee first thing in the morning, but on occasion I get pulled in one direction or another, causing me to be a little later than usual.

We all know how quickly our priorities can change. In fact, that's why we should never consider safety a priority — priorities change too often. Safety is a value and our values rarely ever change.

Intent

I want...

- To make a difference in the lives of others.
- To help others become more safe and caring individuals.
- To see teammates, employees and associates make safety more intentional.
- To see fewer workers hurt on the job.
- To help moms and dads return home safe to their children.
- To help workers understand the “why” of working safely.
- To be a coach and mentor in relation to all things safety.

Design

Most blurbs consist of a picture, meme or quote I've seen or read somewhere within the last few days or week. I see and hear “blurb-worthy” material in pretty much everything I do these days. In fact, I have countless teammates, friends and others sending me items they think might be good to “blurb.”

The following are a few samples of “Thurb's Blurbs”:

Team — No matter what difficulties we're facing — they are temporary!

Sure they may seem out of control or unbearable, but they're not.

The one thing we should know is that we shouldn't have to go it alone.

We're here for each other and we also have an EAP (employee assistance program) that can help us through just about anything.

We all get confused at times; even with safety we might struggle with making the right choices, but that's when a teammate, friend, pastor or neighbor steps up to help.

Seriously though, let's commit to being strong enough to ask for help.

Team — We've all had our bad days. In fact, nobody's perfect! The thing to remember is that we can remain injury free when we focus on safety. Today's Monday and we're off to a great start. Let's all be certain to do whatever it takes to prevent incident and injury.

One safe today at a time.

Team — It's Sunday and our day of rest. Sure some of us are working, but to those there's a Sunday coming soon enough. Sundays are an excellent day for catching up. By the way, our bodies need hydration, nutrition and rest for us to remain at our very best. It's important to remember all three of those elements. Let's rest, relax and renew today. They'll be plenty of “todays” ahead of us if we're direct, careful and intentional about safety.

Our efforts don't go unnoticed or unappreciated — thanks!

Team — Life lesson #1 is that regardless of how awful this night might feel, morning comes with new opportunities for peace and greatness. So when things don't go our way, we still keep going — that's the beauty of it. Strangely enough, that's just like safety. We do all the right things and on occasion something happens to change that. We can fall to pieces or recognize that today is a new day. Some might like to do a little of both.

Let's dig in and find the pieces we need to form an excellent zero-injury workday. It's going to require 100% of the team — 100% of the time. No excuses — no exceptions!

Conclusion

I want to thank everyone who attempts to make a difference in the lives of others. I believe we'd all agree that safety is personal and it's our personal responsibility to work safely; however, we're also responsible for each other. Safety requires courage! It's not the easiest thing, nor is it the most glamorous or financially rewarding; however, it's the right thing to do. Staying safe and keeping our families, teammates and communities safe enables us all to enjoy the quality of life that was originally intended for us to experience. The fact is, injuries change lives and we should all be looking for ways to reduce task-related risks, whether on or off the job.

If you'd like to receive “Thurb's Blurbs” daily, please send me a note at paul.thurber@nucor.com. ♦