



# SAFETY FIRST

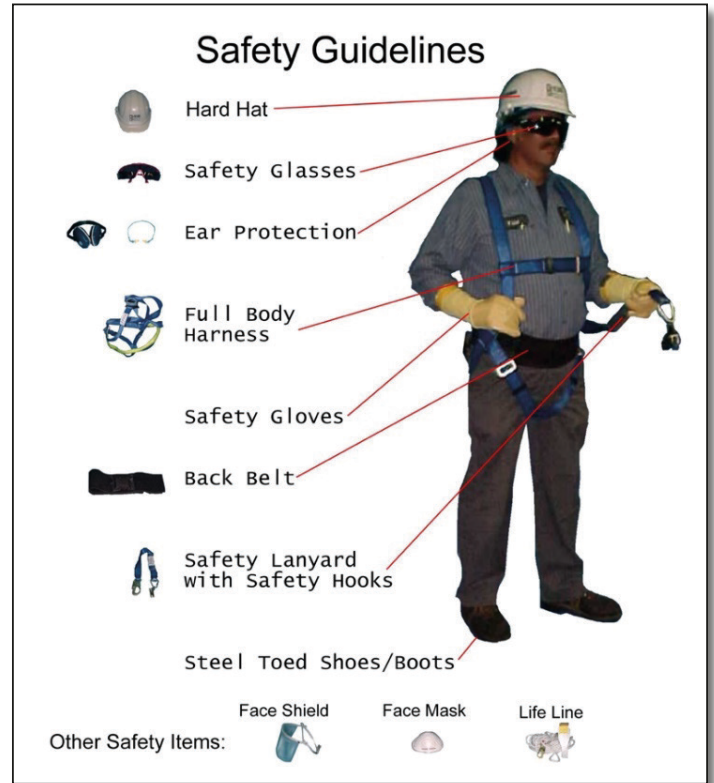
John Farewell | State Circuit Rider II

After the show, the Circus Patrons were invited to gather around the back of the Big Top to get a closer look at all the show animals. One man noticed that “Abby the Elephant” was being held in place by only a small chain and tent stake. He asked the Ring Master, “How is it that these small items are able to contain such a large and powerful animal?” The Ring Master replied, “It’s not the chain or stake that are containing Abby, rather it’s her belief that they are.” The Ring Master went on to explain that when Abby was a newborn, they tied her with a large chain to a pole. After several days of pulling and trying to free herself, she finally accepted her fate and gave up the fight. Now, to keep her in place, we simply put a small chain on her and connect it to this tent stake. The fact that she believes the chain can hold her, even though it can’t, is what controls her.

As human beings, we too acquire beliefs that are based on experience. For example, “It will never happen to me”. Mistakenly, we often believe because we have done something 1000 times and nothing has ever happened, that it never will. What could possibly go wrong? According to the United States Department of Labor over 4500 people die in work related accidents every year. I wonder how many of those people believed it couldn’t happen to them? As I write this article, the 2017 construction year is gearing up. At the top of your list of things to do, I hope that safety is your number one priority. The thought that it can never happen to me is a tragedy waiting to happen. I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve gotten something in my eyes because I failed to put on safety glasses. The times that I have stepped out in traffic without a safety vest and nearly got run down. Or the number of times the bank caved in while working in a trench without proper shoring. I once took a chunk out of my blue jeans with a chainsaw, simply because I didn’t want to be bothered with the expense and the time it would take to purchase and dawn a good set of chaps. Considering some of the stupid things I’ve done over the years, the fact that I am even here to write this article is a miracle in itself.

This picture illustrates some safety equipment that should be on hand and ready to use at all times. There is much to be said about this equipment. I won’t bore you with all the details, however it would be wise to check with the OSHA and PESH standards to be sure that your equipment is in compliance.

Each task will come with its own unique challenges. If you’re working in the roadways, traffic control will need to be addressed. Do you have the proper equipment needed such as traffic cones?



Is your job site set up according to the requirements listed in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control? In it, as well as in the NYS Supplement, you will find the proper procedures for setting up a work zone in roadways. Are you working in a trench? Do you have a trench box? Have you called Dig Safely and gotten clearance from all underground utilities BEFORE you dig? Are you working in high places? Do you have a harness on? How about confined spaces, are you following the proper protocol? Working on equipment that others have access to? Are you using a lock out, tag out system? Safety is everybody’s business and should be a priority to all.

**For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends: but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.**

**James Allen**

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Paul Chatfield with Chatfield Engineers. Paul was the speaker at one of our training classes which dealt with aging infrastructures and how to develop a plan to address this issue. In his lecture, he not only talked about the importance of developing plans to improve our >>>

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infrastructures but also developing plans to improve ourselves. He went on to say that too often we develop strategies to make necessary improvements on the job, but never develop a plan to improve ourselves. In his book "As a Man Thinketh" Author James Allen writes, "For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends: but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy". For anyone to have a mindset that "it will never happen to me" is to say that you are your own worst enemy and not someone I would want to be working with. I wonder how many of those 4500 people would still be alive today if they would have only considered the consequences. Not to say that they all brought their own deaths on themselves. Sometimes it's someone else's negligence that gets others hurt, or worse yet, killed. Try living with that.

In closing, I would encourage each of you to take the good advice of Mr. Chatfield, as I have, and begin developing a plan to improve yourself. I wonder what would happen if Abby was to step back and take a good look at her situation? I wonder if she would realize that just a little tug would free her from the prison that she lives in. What is your prison? What is your vise? What is it that you have believed all your life because of a past experience? Maybe it's time you step back and take a second look. What is it in your life that needs to change? What improvements can you make to yourself to become a better person? What's holding you back? Why not give a little tug on your chain and free yourself. If this world is ever going to be a better place, than it needs to start from within. Be safe out there and remember, you have loved ones that want to see you come home tonight. 💧💧