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"For Safety's Sake - Do Something"

SSOE GROUP IS A PROJECT DELIVERY FIRM FOR ARCHITECTURE, ENGINEERING, AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT.

Avoiding the Line of Fire

The term "*line of fire*" in safety is very common when talking about the hazards of a work task. Depending on the work being completed, there could be many different lines of fire or there could be very few. It is important to understand what the line of fire is and how to avoid being in it to avoid injuries. What is line of fire? A simple definition is being in harm's way. Line of fire injuries occur when the path of a moving object, or the release of hazardous energy, intersects with an individual's body.

There are three major categories of **line of fire** incidents:

- **Caught-in or between:** A construction worker is standing between a wall and an excavator. When the excavator spins around the counterweight pins the worker against the wall. Another example would be a worker placing his hand too close to a rotating gear and gets it pulled into the gear.
- **Released energy:** A pipe releasing hot steam from a valve that is being removed or a flame shooting out of a malfunctioning engine are examples of released energy.
- **Struck by:** A pedestrian struck by a moving vehicle or an object falling from a higher level striking a worker below are examples of struck by incidents.

Avoiding Line of Fire Incidents:

The best way to avoid the mentioned incident types is to identify and eliminate line of fire hazards whenever possible. By eliminating the hazards, there is no chance that you or anyone else in the work area can be injured by that hazard.

When elimination is not possible, engineering controls are the next best choice in protecting yourself from injury. Some engineering controls that could protect you from line of fire incidents include physical barriers, guarding around moving parts, and toe boards on elevated work platforms to prevent objects from falling to the area below. There are many other possible engineering controls that could be used depending on the specific hazard.

Total elimination of hazards is not always possible and engineering controls may not be feasible or they can fail. Because of this reality, it is important to decrease your chance of being a victim of line of fire injuries by not putting yourself in harm's way in the first place. Understand the work tasks that are going on around you and the associated hazards. Ask yourself what is the worst that can happen or what will happen if a certain safeguard fails. Recognize the hazards of your work and act accordingly.

