



## **“Dealing with Dumb” and Company Safety**

*-- Al E. Bavry, CEO, Kimal Lumber & Hardware*

A little story about me... About twenty or so years ago, at our Nokomis yard, a customer had asked to use our table saw to cut a little lumber he was taking to a job. Of course I said "Yes." A few minutes later, and with me standing directly behind him and our DeWalt table saw, he was ripping wood. Specifically, he was ripping one edge of a 2X6 at a forty five degree angle. Get the picture? The saw was binding a bit...and then...next thing I know...this 45 degree ragged wood wedge "sailed" by me and "arrowed" halfway through an inch and a three quarter door!! I

At first I thought I was O.K., until I looked down at my right wrist to see a big, deep 2-1/2 inch raw slice across the top of my arm. I immediately moved my fingers, which at least all worked, so I knew it could have been worse! A little later, in the Emergency Room at the local hospital, Dr. Moomau, the Female ER Doc., said, "Bear with me for a moment...this will hurt." Sure enough, eight or so Lydacane shots later, I agreed...It hurt like hell...!! She had to shoot it up that much because she had to pull the inside "meat" together and sew it up with degradable stitches. And then she stapled the outside skin together. The good news is, if I had been about three inches more to the right, that wedge probably would have gone at the very least, halfway through me.

So what I did--standing behind that saw--was dumb! Just plain dumb!! A few years later I visited the GP Plywood Plant in Hawthorn, Florida. The billboard at the gate proclaimed, "Over One Million Hours Worked with Zero Accidents." That really said something. Obviously *nobody* at the GP Plywood Plant had done something dumb and caused an accident for years and years. So, here's where the "Rubber Hits the Pavement"...As well as myself, Kimal as a company just didn't take safety as seriously as it should be taken. No more! Yes, we started to take safety seriously...No, very seriously.

To take safety to a truly serious level, a "revolution" had to be put into action. What I learned is simple...Acquiring a true safety record and standards is not a case of well-focused "once a month" safety meetings. Nor is it nice, bright, well-lettered signs throughout the company. Nor is it snappy slogans or "Buzz Words" mentioned at the start of the day, or remembering safety glasses. Once in a while all of the above work, but with serious safety there can be only one Mission: To absolutely put safety at the forefront of *everything you do...every waking minute of every day*. And if you're the C.E.O./Owner, *you* set the pace.

Next-in-command of the serious safety program is the Center Leader. But it squarely rests on all shoulders. Going down the chain of command, that yard foreman, supervisor, production leader, whomever, has to be 100% as "anal" as you are. Never be "Dumb"! It starts with you, and then has to be pushed down so every single person has 'bought in" and is taking equal responsibility.

The last thing to remember (whether it be yourself or anyone else in the company) is that you should never, ever, use or accept those lame excuses..."Too busy"..."Hey, nobody trained me"..."Really, I'm Safe...most of the time!" And it goes on. It must be Zero tolerance. No excuses...I truly believe, when it comes to Associates and customers, SAFETY should always be "Job One"...and everything else will take care of itself.