

VOLTS Newsletter

VALUING OUR LIVES THROUGH SAFETY

April 2019, Volume 65

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Brain-Centered Hazards

Earlier this month, several members of the VOLTS Steering Committee attended the 2019 Safety in Action Conference. The purpose of the conference is to help safety steering committees in all kinds of industries improve the safety processes and practices for the employees at their businesses.

A few of the classes discussed brain-centered hazards—like fatigue, divided attention, or multi-tasking—that disrupt your focus while completing job tasks. It also includes the potential hazards and safety risks that occur when there is a “disconnect” between the brain and action before thinking through consequences adequately. Brain-centered hazard—and its counterpart brain-centric exposure—are fairly new concepts when it comes to safety on the job and include fast-brain and slow-brain thinking.

Fast-brain thinking takes about 4/10 of a second and includes subconscious decisions we make—things that are automatic. Someone who speaks without thinking uses fast-brain action. Slow-brain thinking is something that must be contemplated and takes about 5/10 of a second. At IPSC, we are asked to take time to be safe. It only takes a second or two to pause and think about the consequences of our actions. That time may make all the difference in the

world when it comes to our safety and the safety of those around us.

One example of a brain-centric hazard is an employee who is preoccupied at work thinking about things that are going on in his/her personal life. He/she may have a spouse or parent who is sick with an unknown illness or a child breaking away from the family culture. Financial concerns caused by medical bills or unexpected telephone calls from authorities may add to the stress. When you add the long hours and uncommon tasks that happen in the middle of the outage, an employee might become very distracted. Responsibilities as a community member like city council, school board, rodeo committee, coach, irrigation water board, scout leader, etc., also add to possible diversions. It is difficult to check these distractions at the gate when coming to work. They are often on our minds during the day—even when we should focus on tasks that are very crucial and out of the ordinary. Adding coworkers or supervisors who are also stressed, abrasive, or downgrading—whether perceived or actual—makes focusing on tasks even

Stickers

We have plenty of “**Observe Me**” hardhat stickers and 6” stickers for tool boxes, hutches, offices. If you want some, ask a Steering Committee member!

more difficult for employees. One's brain is only capable of so much, and focusing on working safely and accomplishing the task may not be their primary thought.

Each person's responsibility in these examples is the definition of safety "*controlling exposures for self and others.*" Everyone can improve our work environment by having more empathy toward others—we cannot know what someone else is going through and most people are quiet about the stresses in their lives. If we treat everyone we work with as if they were going through some type of stress or hardship, we will be right 75 percent of the time. The best way to do this is to assist those around us and complete our tasks without complaint in a timely fashion helping our crew, our supervisor, and the plant load availability. Who knows, we might improve the stress level for several people at the same time! If we see someone in need, step up and help them to work safer. As we perform an observation in the correct manner, we help people pull their focus back to the task at hand instead of them missing something because of their state of mind. Without each IPSC employee, there is no VOLTS safety process!

Morgan shared the following, "Once when I was on backshift, I had a Sunday day shift when one pulverizer needed a new sluice water valve installed to be able to pull rejects. In addition, an air compressor needed new intake filters to lower the differential pressure and a pipe came loose on a mill in Unit 1 spilling 200 gallons of gear oil all over the floor. All of a sudden I had a mill

in each unit that could have made IPSC unavailable for full load! The I&C tech on backshift voluntarily replaced the sluice water valve allowing me to fix the other mill. A luber also answered his phone (on Sunday) and told me where I could find all the oil and pumps to quickly refill the gear box with oil. Neither of these people needed to help—it was not their responsibility—but they chose to go above and beyond what was asked of them. When these problems happened all at once, I felt overwhelmed being alone with the workload; but when I had help and supervision that was supportive in every way, I no longer was a brain-centered hazard to myself or the IPSC equipment."

During the outage, one of our biggest brain-centered hazards is the long hours and fatigue that sets in. We feel a constant urgency and rush with tasks that may require more focus. Breathe, focus, and execute your tasks safely. Be careful out there, and get the rest it takes to give your work 100 percent of your attention. Our goal is to have everyone go home safely at the end of **every** shift.

The **VOLTS Steering Committee** is here to serve IPSC employees. If anyone has suggestions or concerns about the VOLTS process, contact one of these members:

Aaron Cull	Clark Callister	Nick Brinkerhoff
Amy White	John Viola	Todd Hathaway
Casey Draper	Morgan Christensen	Van Beckstrom

2019 Outage Safety in Action Award

Remember to watch for any IPSC employees who go above and beyond working safely and use the following form to nominate someone for this award. Again, safety is defined as "*reducing exposure for self and others.*" We will select four people to receive this award and nominations will be accepted until May 1, 2019.

2019 Outage Safety in Action Award Nomination Form

(Please detach form and submit it in one of the VOLTS observation drop boxes or give to a VOLTS Steering Committee member.)

Name _____

Please give three reasons or examples of how this person is a role model for working safely or helping others to work safely.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

