

SAFETY STARTS WITH AWARENESS, AWARENESS STARTS WITH YOU:
The Bernie Inman Story

This easy-to-use Leader's Guide is provided to assist in conducting a successful presentation. Featured are:

INTRODUCTION: A brief description of the program and the subject that it addresses.

PROGRAM OUTLINE: Summarizes the program content. If the program outline is discussed before the video is presented, the entire program will be more meaningful and successful.

PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION: These sections will help you set up the training environment, help you relate the program to site-specific incidents, and provide program objectives for focusing your presentation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Questions may be copied and given to participants to stimulate discussion about the program, its safety lessons and universal theme.

INTRODUCTION

Bernie and Sheila Inman's world was turned upside down when Bernie suffered horrific injuries at work, leaving him in a coma with a grim prognosis: no chance of meaningful recovery. If he were to survive, the doctors predicted he would be blind, brain damaged and completely paralyzed. In this program, Bernie and Sheila candidly discuss the events leading to Bernie's injuries, and in the process deliver a powerful message on the importance of safety awareness, safe work practices and the far-reaching effects of a workplace injury. After listening to Bernie and Sheila's message, viewers of this unique presentation will understand the importance of seemingly simple safety choices and decisions. Bernie does not know or understand why he survived his ordeal, but he insists on turning his tragedy into a positive by sharing his story with others.

Topics include the dangers of complacency and shortcuts, how your choices affect others, wearing appropriate PPE in all required situations, ripple effects of an injury, why workplace communication is critical and reasons to work safely.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

BACKGROUND

- Bernie and Sheila Inman met in 1986 when Bernie invited Sheila to escort him to one of his best friend's wedding.
- Sheila knew right away that Bernie was the one for her because they had so much fun together.
- They waited until they had everything in place financially and were ready to have a family before marrying in 1993.
- After marriage they had the "world by the tail." They had secure jobs, a nice home and were expecting their first child.
- In the blink of an eye, it all changed. In the blink of an eye, the best laid plans of Bernie and Sheila Inman were changed forever.
- They had the world by the tail until a workplace injury tore it from their grasp. Now, they have different plans and dreams.
- One plan is to help others understand how truly important safety awareness is to both workers and their families. Safety starts with awareness; awareness starts with you.

BERNIE REPORTS TO WORK AS USUAL

- One cold morning on January 24, Bernie walked out the door and went to work, just as he had done for 10 years. Little did he know that it would be the last chance he had to walk anywhere again.
- Bernie was employed as a gas plant operator by a major North American oil and gas producer. He was good at his job and very confident in his skills.
- He never dreamed he'd be injured performing the duties of his job.
- When you learn to do what you do, you get comfortable with your surroundings; you may lose a little bit of respect with regards to the equipment or the job that you're doing.
- Bernie is the first to admit that complacency played a significant role in the incident that occurred later that day.
- He arrived at the plant at 7 a.m. to find the operation running in a smooth and steady fashion.

BERNIE PERFORMS ROUTINE JOB DUTIES

- Bernie's log book indicates nothing unusual about that day, confirming that he performed routine maintenance.
- He adjusted process flows and traveled from location to location in search of increased production. By operating the facility by himself, he had to maintain 60 to 80 miles of gathering facilities.
- Bernie never made an effort to let anybody know where he was going, what he was doing or when he was going to be clear. This proved to be a major mistake.
- He entered his last log book entry at 3:30 p.m.
- He finished lighting the heaters in a remote well location and had only one more stop to make before going home.
- A nearby location required a simple process adjustment. Bernie fully expected to open the door and spend a couple of short moments to adjust the operation so the facility would flow in a normal fashion.
- No one knows exactly what happened next, but Bernie didn't come out of the building for another 11½ hours.

THE INCIDENT

- The ensuing investigation into Bernie's incident indicated that he was wearing a ball cap and reading glasses instead of a hardhat and safety glasses. This was a glowing example of complacency "rearing its ugly head" as well as a blatant disregard for company policy.
- Because there was a significant wound on his forehead and a flow meter was broken directly in front of the entrance door, Bernie believes that at some point he lost his footing and struck his forehead.
- Something as simple as rushing into a familiar building or being distracted by thoughts of going home could have caused him to miss a step or to trip.
- The strike to the forehead caused Bernie to become disoriented. During this time, he moved about the building that measured eight by 12 feet and was equipped with two 36-inch doors.
- Not being able to get outside of the building, Bernie eventually came into contact with a bleed valve found on the methanol injection pump.

- When he came into contact with the bleed valve, it opened and released a large quantity of methanol, a chemical used for freeze protection. The proximity of the bleed valve to the building's small catalytic heater contributed to a rapidly worsening situation.
- Because methanol flashes into a vapor when heated up, Bernie was undoubtedly inhaling methanol fumes. Methanol, the main ingredient in anti-freeze, is highly toxic and causes damage to nerve functions, many organ functions and the optic nerve in the eye.
- Due to the slowness with which it is eliminated from the body, methanol is regarded as a cumulative poison; the greater the exposure, the worse the results. Bernie's 11½-hour exposure was as bad as it gets.

THE SEARCH FOR BERNIE

- When Sheila got home that night, the house was dark and Bernie wasn't home. She assumed he had stopped off at a friend's house to visit.
- After waiting for an hour, she began to worry. She started phoning around to his friends, none of whom had heard from or seen Bernie.
- She finally called one friend, Al Tucker, and asked him to go look for Bernie. Al began retracing Bernie's path shortly before midnight.
- He searched every location where he thought Bernie may have been hurt or experienced trouble; unfortunately, Bernie was located at the very last place Al looked.
- Al found Bernie unconscious in a large pool of methanol. Part of his leg was lying on top of the methanol pump and the rest of his body was close to the heater.
- Bernie's clothing was saturated in methanol up to his neck and his lungs were full of toxic vapors.

BERNIE'S INJURIES & PROGNOSIS

- During the three and a half-week time period Bernie was unconscious, his loved ones and those closest to him suffered through "absolute hell." It was something they did not deserve to suffer through, based on his decision that day.
- If he did survive, the prognosis was that he would be brain damaged, institutionalized and blind. Also he would have a different personality and have the shakes.
- The doctors couldn't answer any of their questions. They didn't know for sure what methanol could do to him; they had never had a case like this before.
- Because he was employed as an oil and gas plant operator, people assumed that Bernie had been burned in an explosion or involved in some kind of fire, but there wasn't an explosion or fire. The burn area on his body was caused by massive exposure to methanol.
- His clothing was saturated in methanol and his skin was soaking it up. The burn area was assessed at 70 percent with second and third degree burns.
- The blood work from the lab showed Bernie had as much methanol content in his bloodstream as there was blood content. The medical staff at the trauma center didn't really know how to treat something of that magnitude.
- His kidneys and liver failed and his lungs were burned so severely internally that he was no longer able to breathe on his own.

HOW THE INJURIES AFFECT BERNIE'S FAMILY & LOVED ONES

- The magnitude of his injuries brought Bernie's family members to the hospital on a number of occasions because he "wasn't supposed to be there come morning."
- When they went into the room, there was no movement from Bernie. There was action from all the machines around him; all the lifelines were "bleeping and blurring."
- There were good days and bad days. It just led them down "a terrible path," says Bernie's father. It was like that for a number of days; one step ahead, two back, one ahead, two back.
- When Bernie's temperature had spiked up around 104, they figured that was the end for him.
- Other family members left their hotel room to go to the hospital, but Bernie's mother says she couldn't do it; she couldn't watch him die.

"I guess we just didn't know what the future held; it was a scary time," says Sheila.

- Bernie says he feels "extremely poorly" that his loved ones had to suffer through that for such an extended period of time.
- Workers have to appreciate how their decisions can affect the family at home, according to Sheila. "Bernie's decision that day not to wear his PPE affected us, and it will continue to affect us for the rest of our days," she says.
- "It's easy to sit back and say 'you know if I had another chance, I'd put the rest of my PPE on.' There is no second chance. It's done and I'm spending the rest of my life in a wheelchair," concludes Bernie.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM BERNIE'S STORY

- There are many important lessons to be learned from Bernie and Sheila's story. Some are obvious.
- Always wear your required personal protective equipment.
- Follow your company's policies and don't give into complacency or being in a hurry.
- Their story clearly illustrates how choices can have huge consequences, not just for us, but for our loved ones as well.
- Bernie's story also underscores the importance of communication, especially when you're working alone. Simply letting someone know where you're going and when you should return can be a life saver.
- Perhaps less obvious but equally important is to understand that serious injuries can occur even in areas you don't feel are hazardous. This requires you to be vigilant about safety all the time, not just when you think it is important.
- Perhaps the most important lesson is to simply understand that serious workplace injuries do happen; they happen to real people like Bernie and Sheila and they can happen to you.

BERNIE'S RECOVERY

- Bernie and Sheila never gave up hope through the whole ordeal. Some things came back, others were harder to heal.
- His physical recovery came back very slow. He has limited movement from his head to his toe.

- His mental recovery goes on everyday. They just have to remember it could've gone the other way.
- Although he's limited in his physical ability as the result of a workplace incident, Bernie still considers himself "fortunate, lucky and blessed" that he's able to spend quality time with his wife and children.
- The family enjoys spending quality time together at the lake. "I think that's why safety is so important. It's the ability to come home every night and enjoy your family," says Bernie.

SAFETY STARTS WITH AWARENESS, AWARENESS STARTS WITH YOU

- Safety is a culture, an attitude and something we all need to embrace on a regular basis. This isn't something where we can wake up one day and say, "I'm going to be safe today because today is the day I might be injured."
- How effective this is for all of you is entirely up to you. The onus is upon us as individuals to function with safety in mind at all times.
- Understand the policies and procedures.
- Make sure the appropriate personal protective equipment is being utilized.
- Educate yourselves on the dangers of any chemicals to which you may be exposed. It comes in the form of a materials safety data sheet.
- Let the communication flow.
- You combine all these things together and add a positive outlook with a safety-conscious attitude and you create the safest possible location to conduct business. And that's what it's all about.
- Remember, safety starts with awareness, awareness starts with you.

PREPARE FOR THE SAFETY MEETING OR TRAINING SESSION

Review each section of this Leader's Guide as well as the videotape. Here are a few suggestions for using the program:

Make everyone aware of the importance the company places on health and safety and how each person must be an active member of the safety team.

Introduce the videotape program. Play the videotape without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Copy the discussion questions included in this Leader's Guide and hand them out to the program participants.

Make an attendance record and have each participant sign the form. Maintain the attendance record written documentation of the training performed.

Here are some suggestions for preparing your videotape equipment and the room or area you use:

Check the room or area for quietness, adequate ventilation and temperature, lighting and unobstructed access.

Check the seating arrangement and the audiovisual equipment to ensure that all participants will be able to see and hear the videotape program.

Place or secure extension cords to prevent them from becoming a tripping hazard.

CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION

Begin the meeting by welcoming the participants. Introduce yourself and give each person the opportunity to become acquainted if there are new people joining the training session.

Explain that the primary purpose of the program is to tell Bernie Inman's story so viewers will understand the importance of safety awareness and safe work practices as well as the far-reaching effects of a workplace injury.

Introduce the videotape program. Play the videotape without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Lead discussions about specific safety procedures that must be followed at your facility to prevent catastrophic injuries such as those suffered by Bernie.

After watching the videotape program, the viewer will be able to explain the following:

- How complacency played a role in Bernie's injuries;
- Why PPE should be worn in all required situations;
- Why it is important to maintain communication with others when working alone;
- How serious injuries can occur even in areas that don't appear hazardous;
- How serious workplace injuries can affect a person's family and loved ones.

Copy the discussion questions included in this Leader's Guide and allow the participants to review them before discussing the program.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bernie admits that complacency played a significant role in his incident. What types of incidents could occur at this facility if employees are complacent while performing their jobs?
2. Bernie obviously didn't consider the building where he was injured as a hazardous work area. Which areas at this facility contain hazards that are often ignored by employees? What types of injuries could result if employees don't protect themselves from these hazards?
3. Bernie never made an effort to let anyone know where he was or what he was doing at the plant, which proved to be a major mistake. Are there any job tasks that you undertake where it is important to let someone know where you are and what you are doing? If so, what are they?
4. Bernie's incident put his family through "absolute hell." How would your family be affected if you suffered injuries similar to Bernie's?
5. After watching this video, will you approach the way you perform your duties differently? Why or why not?
6. The theme of this video is "safety starts with awareness, awareness starts with you." What does this phrase mean to you?