



***HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY TO ALL OUR READERS***

# Golden Safety Rules

There are Safety Rules and there are Golden Safety Rules.

Following the news about two BHP workers sacked for breaching “Life Saving Rules” then being reinstated when the courts determined that their sacking was unfair ([see the story here](#)). I thought it may be timely to republish this article I wrote a few

It is no secret that **Health and Safety** and its associated systems and procedures has become way over complicated. The result is frustration and confusion for those who must comply and those who must enforce, particularly for the poor old Contractors who encounter different rules, or variations of them at every site they go to. Imagine the mental gymnastics by a Manager or Supervisor who sees his best worker breach one of these Golden Rules and all eyes are upon him waiting to see what he will do.

Many companies (co-incidentally those who have created these convoluted behemoths of safety systems) have tried reduce the confusion and the new risk this has created by introducing “**Golden Safety Rules**”. Some have fancy names like: “**Fatal Risk Protocols**”, “**Life Saving Rules**”, “**Cardinal Rules**” and “**Safety Non-negotiables**” – why we cant all be consistent I do not know???

To quote [Dr Rob Long](#):

*Rules are parts of systems and systems serve humans not humans serve systems. Unfortunately, safety engineers seem to think that humans serve systems.*

*People don't die because they break Cardinal rules, you can die just as easily by keeping all the rules. This is the nature of turbulence when rules don't fit context, change and adaptability. Decision making and human judgement is not simple nor black and white and because risk is all about uncertainty there is no formula for every context as change and randomness alter the landscape of choice and decision. So what is a rule one minute can just as easy be a burden in the next. This is the nature of human decision making and the social shaping of culture and environment. A culture built on absolutes has to be ruled absolutely, what a fearful and terrifying culture.*

The premise is to develop a set of critical rules for the site or organization that reflect the inherent high risks. Whilst recognized that all safety rules are mandatory there are always some that have the potential to seriously injure or kill and should come with increased consequences if they are deliberately breached. It is not an easy concept, considering we are all human and the last thing a company should be doing is taking away the ability or rights of people to think for themselves, identify and understand risk and use initiative. The process must be done properly and in consultation, as for all effective safety initiatives.

### **Some Golden Rules for Making Golden Safety Rules:**

1. Keep the number of rules to as few as possible.
2. Allow for some flexibility and the reality of human fallibility.
3. Make them personal i.e. "I will not" rather than "Do not"
4. Consult, Communicate, communicate, communicate, educate and ensure ALL understand
5. They must be very relevant to the actual workplace
6. They should cover high risks and situations or behaviours that can cause serious harm
7. Responsibilities must be clearly defined
8. The rules must apply to everybody
9. Define not only what they are but also how to comply
10. The rules must be within an individuals control
11. Make them clear and concise
12. Make the penalty fit the crime.
13. Be fair and consistent in the application and enforcement.
14. Establish an out for when there is no way forward identified without breaching the Golden Rules i.e. stop work and consult with Manager
15. Clearly communicate the punishment for breaches and who will determine – using words like "may result in disciplinary action or termination" will dilute the importance

**A few examples of GOLDEN SAFETY RULES (these are not models but actual examples – would you use these or modify them?):**

1. Do not operate any mobile plant unless It has been assessed and Authorized in writing by the Site Manager or the Site Managers representative.
2. Prior to working on any equipment, it must be isolated and de-energised.
3. All work at height above 2.0 meters must use fall protection/fall restraint equipment.
4. Do not stand under a suspended load.
5. I will not enter a Confined Space or Restricted Area unless Authorized.
6. Look after each other, health and safety is a team game
7. Think before you start work, do a TAKE 5 – know the risks
8. Report ALL accidents and near misses
9. Wear all PPE as required by signage
10. Only undertake work for which you are trained and competent
11. Do not work under the influence of drugs or alcohol
12. Use the correct equipment for the task
13. No cutting of corners
14. Must have a *Permit to Work* when required;
15. Use energy isolations when required, do not tamper with or remove unless you installed or are authorized
16. No removal or disabling of safety equipment, devices or signage
17. No walking or working below suspended loads
18. No smoking outside designated areas
19. No use of mobile phone when operating vehicles or walking at any time in production areas
20. Do not bring a weapon on site (other than a necessary tool of trade for work)

Readers may please note that D. L. Shah Trust brings out two e-journals on a fortnightly basis. These are mailed to those persons or institutions who are desirous of receiving them:

These two e-journals are:

1. Safety Info
2. Quality Info

If you or your friends or colleagues wish to receive these journals, you may send us an email requesting for the same. There is no charge for these journals. Our e-mail address is:

[dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in) or [haritaneja@hotmail.com](mailto:haritaneja@hotmail.com) or [dlshahtrust@gmail.com](mailto:dlshahtrust@gmail.com)

You can also access these journals on our website: [www.dlshahtrust.org](http://www.dlshahtrust.org)

Published by : D. L. Shah Trust,  
Bell Building, 2nd Floor,  
Sir P. M. Road  
Mumbai 400001  
email: [dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in)  
Ph: 022-2283 8890  
Subscription: Free on request  
(soft copy only)

Edited by : Hari K Taneja, Trustee,  
D. L. Shah Trust  
email: [dlshahtrust@gmail.com](mailto:dlshahtrust@gmail.com)  
TeleFax:022-230 9609  
Phone: 022-2309 6529  
Subscription: Free on request  
(soft copy only)