



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



Shall vs Should Safety Message

Lets assume that no one purposely violates a life-threatening rule. Now, some of you are aware of someone who was seriously injured, or worse, when a rule or work practice was violated.

But consider this: The person who violated the rule or work practice had to perceive that the task at hand was life threatening – yet maybe it never occurred to them that it was.

The word “shall” or “should.”

“Shall” rules must be followed all the time. Some are OSHA regulations or laws. A shall rule may also have come into force because of an event that happened at a company that was so devastating, the company said the rule must be followed without deviation, or it could be something that has been on the books for a long time.

“Should” rules encompass all the good practices we typically follow but allow deviation from if a well-thought-out plan is developed.

“I should install more cover on that conductor.”

“I should wait until someone gets here to watch my back.”

“I should adjust my speed due to these road or weather conditions.”

The word “should” in each of the sentences above indicates you have a choice. For example, you could decide not to adjust your driving speed on a rainy night, but you know that you should. The point is, these working thoughts that pop into your head signify that you realize you are in danger of purposely violating a rule – BUT no one purposely violates a life-threatening rule. You may call it your “better judgment” or perhaps “common sense,” but these terms add up to the same thing: what we call The Rule of Should.