



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



The Rule of Should

I want to tell you about "The Rule of Should". Almost every OSHA rule utilizes 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.

In the other category are "should" rules. A should rule encompasses all the good practices we typically follow but allow deviation from if a well-thought-out plan is developed. This is not the rule I am discussing here. We are not reviewing those rules that are written down and should be followed. We are discussing The Rule of Should, which is not in your safety book. Consider using The Rule of Should when you are performing a task and think:

"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 violating the first RLism – that 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 I call The Rule of Should.

If all of us would listen a bit more to our internal Rule of Should, we could take even greater strides toward minimizing incidents. So, the next time you think the words "I should," look around to see if you are about to violate a life-threatening rule – and then choose to act in the safest way possible.