

PROFESSIONALS PLAY IT SAFE

Every day, millions of people around the world enjoy watching their favorite professional athletes compete. Why do we admire these athletes and show so much respect for their abilities? Perhaps, it is because they are so good at what they do. But what about you? Are you good at your profession? What can we learn from the pros and how can we apply it to our jobs?

The pros know that their bodies must be in top condition if they are to perform at their optimal level. They take precautions before they compete to avoid injury and succeed. So, similar to a professional athlete, we need to prepare ourselves both mentally and physically in order to stay safe, perform at our best, and have a long career.

A Game Plan: We need to be prepared mentally as we begin each work day. This means being alert to hazards and knowing what we want to accomplish each day. Often, in sports the winning team is the one with more focus and a better plan. The right game plan is to be aware of the hazards around you and remain focused on the job at hand. Do not be afraid to set aside a few minutes before each shift to review the goals for the day and how you plan to safely reach those goals.

Warming Up: Properly preparing for the work day should involve warming up your body and muscles by stretching. A basketball team never begins a game without first warming up and taking practice shots. A soccer team sets aside time before each game to stretch. You and I should take the same precautions. Stretching loosens muscles that are tight from inactivity and gets blood circulating to the areas of the body that you will be using during the day. Consider what kind of warm-up and stretches would be appropriate before you start your job, and take five minutes to do some simple stretches and prepare your body for the rigors of the day.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE): Have you ever seen a football player take the field without a helmet or knee pads or cleats? Of course not! They know that safety equipment is designed to protect them. PPE is no different. Gloves, shoes, helmets, eye and hearing protection are some of the types of equipment you will need to avoid a career-ending injury. Make sure you know when and how to wear your PPE, when your PPE needs replacing, and the limitations of PPE.

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The Rules of the Game:

Every sport has rules, and they are designed to keep the athletes safe. Your company's safety and health policy is no different. If you want to be safe, you must follow the rules that are in place to protect you. The competitor who plays by the rules avoids penalties and earns praise from coaches and other players. Conversely, breaking the rules leads to penalties, ejections, and even monetary fines.

Do you see parallels to your workplace? The positive and negative reinforcement that you receive regarding safety rules is proof that your employer cares about safety.

Avoid the Disabled List:

When a professional athlete is sidelined with an injury, both the individual and the team suffer. You and your company will also suffer if you cannot work. You can be an all-star for your team by being mentally prepared, physically ready, wearing the proper equipment, and following the rules.