



Perspective

Safety Strengthens Industry

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STATISTICS SHOW that if accidental deaths in the United States had not declined from the 1913 rate when the safety movement was organized, more than one half million more persons would have lost their lives up to now. No one can deny that this is a very fine achievement.

On the other hand, while the death rate from accidents in 1953 was 60 per 100,000 population (the lowest on record), we still had a toll in the United States last year of 95,000 lives and 9.6 million injuries. The time lost by workers from accidents of all kinds was equal to a year's shutdown of industrial plants employing 1,100,000 men and women. In other words, it was the equivalent of removing from production all the plants of General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, and U. S. Steel Corp. It is estimated that 1953 accidents cost our economy more than \$9 billion, representing nearly one-quarter of our budget for national defense. This is a staggering loss of manpower and resources, especially in a period regarded by our national leaders as one of the most critical in our country's history.

The safety movement strengthens our industry in two ways. First, it helps to eliminate the economic waste inherent in preventable accidents. Second, a safe worker is a more efficient worker. Industry learned many years ago that safety and efficiency go

hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other.

The lesson, therefore, is plain. The safety movement, instead of basking in the glow of past accomplishments, must be pursued even more vigorously.

For 40 years American industry has led the organized safety movement and it seems to me that those of us in industry bear a continuing responsibility to help our fellow citizens in any way we can to carry out their various activities in a safer manner. But while we have accumulated a vast store of know-how, there is still a very wide margin between the best and the worst safety performance.

National statistics show that two thirds of all industrial injuries occur in companies with fewer than 100 employees. These companies have an accident frequency which is more than double that of the larger companies. This then seems to me a fruitful area for improving our performance.

A second area where industrial management can be helpful is in the field of public or off-the-job safety. When a skilled workman is unable to report for duty, the economic loss is just as great whether he were injured in the plant or on the highway.

(Excerpts from a speech before the 27th Annual Maine State Safety Conference, York Harbor, Me., Sept. 17, 1954).