



# The Safety Chain

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For this issue of the Safety Chain, my aim is to speak more about the broken link as seen in the above picture. However, this time it will be on a more personal note using myself as the example. As some people learned, both in and outside of C.A.P., I had emergency surgery seven days after I was admitted to the hospital. The reason for the seven day delay is due to the doctors putting me through multiple CT scans and concerned about the fever I had peaking out at 103 degrees.

On Friday night, March 6, near midnight I went to the ER with severe back pain. On a scale of 1 to 10, the pain was between 15 and 20. Early Saturday morning the ER doctor ordered a CT scan. What he found was a tumor about the size of a football near and attached to my left kidney and stated it has to be removed as soon as possible. Some people whom I have spoken since my release asked me if I ever had any symptoms. Well the answer is yes. But the symptoms I had could have pointed to many other medical problems. Here are the some of the links I want to talk about.

I schedule doctor appointments every three months. During the March 2019 appointment just a year ago I weighed 195 pounds. This has been my usual weight for some time now. I decided to change my eating habits such as cutting down on fast foods, drinking more water and less of the sugar drinks such as Coke. By the time of my June appointment my weight dropped to 190 pounds. At my September appointment I regained the five pounds I previously lost. By the time of my December appointment I gained another five pounds. Now I am pushing the scales almost 200 pounds. My doctor mentioned my weight in conjunction with another word that I did not like hearing. I have gained more weight (on the scale) and my eating habits have not changed from what I was eating for the past 9 months. My stomach area just kept getting bigger. Regarding my weight, I noticed that my once tight wrist watch band became very loose like I was losing weight. With my change of eating habits and weight gain this is link number 1 in the chain.

Link number 2, my eating habits changed even more. I noticed I got to a point where I could not eat as much food as I did well over a year ago. I attributed this to the fact that maybe my stomach had become smaller because of eating less food. Again, eating less food expending, the same amount of energy as I had in the past, and still getting a bigger stomach. I grew out of my 38" waist size slacks was moving on and past a 40" waist.

For the past two years since my father died my wife and I have been traveling back and forth to Cincinnati, OH to assist my mother. Each way is just over a two hour drive. After 45 minutes or so I would find feel a pain near my left kidney. I attributed this to not drinking enough water. During the two hour drive I would squirm in the seat to find a comfortable spot to ease the pain. This is link number 3 in the chain.

There were at least two more links. The idea here is that if one looks at any of these links individually my medical issue could have been anything else than what I was diagnosed with having. I am not faulting the doctors for missing this. At first when I was in the ER the medical staff thought I might have a kidney stone. After telling them the medication I take for gout (which can be used for kidney stones), it was decided I probably don't have a kidney stone and to look for another problem. What the doctor found was a tumor about the size of a football.

Although this chain may seem to be unrelated to safety, it really isn't. Mishaps are usually caused by a series of what may seem like unrelated events. Just like my story here, each link when standing alone could be caused by many possibilities. When combined, the links tell a story. Although this story is not complete as no one knows why I developed this tumor. All I know it most likely is not family history but caused by other external factors.

As safety officers we also must try to foresee factors which may pose a risk and mitigate these risks as much as possible. We cannot mitigate 100% of the risks, but we should more closely to that goal each time we plan and execute activities, sorties and training. As safety officers if we can break just one of the links in a series of (unseemly) events then the mishap most likely will be prevented. The same goes for me. I did not put the various links together. If I had I could have told my family physician who could have investigated further. Maybe the tumor could have been found earlier.

When planning any C.A.P. activity safety planning must be at the front end. Everyone involved during the planning stage should meet and brainstorm identifying possible risks and developing the safe guards for implementation. Safety should never be an after-thought; it should be the fore-thought, out front so we are ready for action to break that one link in the chain events.

On another note as the states begin opening up again be safe. The C.D.C. website has excellent information for helping you to stay safe at home and out-and-about. If you cannot find disinfectant you can make it using bleach and water, be sure to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Wear a mask when outside shopping, and carry disinfectant wipes and/or sanitizer with you. Keep at least six feet between yourself and others. Don't depend on the other person else to do these things, you need to do these things.

I know it is not easy, even for me. My doctor has requested me to stay socially-distanced for a while longer which may be another one, two or three months.

As always, should you need to contact me I can be reached via eMail at [knoe@kywg.cap.gov](mailto:knoe@kywg.cap.gov).

*Semper Vigilans*