

The Last Word . . .

Not a New Kid on the Block

Safe for only 25 men at one time.
Do not walk close together, nor
run, jump, or trot. Break step!

W.A. Roebling
Engineer-in-Chief

This sign was posted in May 1877—more than 120 years ago—when the Brooklyn Bridge was under construction. It proves that safety is not a new concept, and many rules written years ago are still valid, just as those above would serve for a footbridge in use today.

One problem with old precautions is that we forget them. They get filed deep in our brains behind the newer information about our jobs and lives.

People still are being injured in the same old ways that slowed down work on the Brooklyn Bridge. For instance, a lance corporal (minus safety goggles) was hammering a nail overhead when the nail ricocheted and punctured his left eye. A warehouseman (wearing regular shoes) was moving a loaded five-drawer file cabinet on a dolly. The cabinet slipped off the dolly and onto the warehouseman's foot. In another mishap, a lance corporal (not wearing a hard hat) was driving an engineering stake into the ground and hit himself on top of his head with the metal driver.

Dig into your memory and recall some of those old rules, such as "Wear a hard hat whenever in a construction area," "Wear safety shoes in industrial areas," "Use eye protection when handling chemicals." There's nothing old-fashioned about them. They are as useful today as ever. ■

Virginia Rae Mack

Note: I'm not really 120 years old, although sometimes my kids seem to think so. I saw this sign in a photograph of the Brooklyn Bridge exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.