

WHY WE NEED WARNING LABELS

While it seems that a barrage of warning labels and warning signs surrounds us, they actually serve a very useful purpose when it comes to our safety. Recently, I was unboxing some electronic item that I had purchased and the box contained these desiccant packages. Desiccant helps reduce moisture in packaged and shipped goods. Surprisingly, the warning label on the package states “DO NOT EAT.” While this may seem apparent to most folks, trust me when I tell you that someone, somewhere, would be compelled to eat this stuff.



HEED WARNING LABELS!

There are three main reasons that warning labels are a necessary element of personal safety. First,

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, and May Complicate Pregnancy.

warning labels add a protective layer to the uneducated or the uninformed. A young child, for example, may be compelled to eat the desiccant, but upon seeing the warning label, the message may be just enough to prevent the consumption from occurring. Second, warning labels provide education to all people. Continuous education on matters of safety is critical to sustaining long-term safety. The reason for this is that when things are going well, we put our guard down, so some individuals need the continuous stream of reminders on what can hurt them. Third, warning labels serve as a stop-measure at the point of contact with the thing that can hurt you. In this way, warning labels such as “Do Not Enter” or “Danger” may be enough to prevent someone from doing something they will learn to regret.

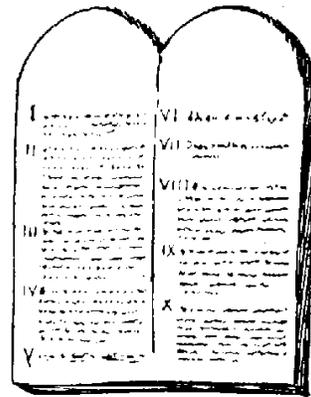
TAKE SAFETY TO THE NEXT LEVEL: HEED THE UNSEEN WARNING LABELS!

While we usually think of warning labels in terms of protecting our physical health and our lives, there are many other warning labels that do not come as actual labels at all. Rather than causing you physical harm, not heeding these are the ones that can make or break your lifelong wealth and happiness. This is evident when we take safety to the next level and think about safety beyond



simply physical harm. Consider that it is a good idea to not cheat on your spouse. Take that as a “warning label” for you marriage. If you don’t heed this warning label, chances are your cheating will cause you extreme emotional trauma and financial loss with the ensuing divorce. Likewise, consider that you should diversify your portfolio in an age-appropriate manner. If you don’t heed this financial management “warning label” you greatly run the risk of being financially broke and very unhappy in what has now turned into a working retirement. Many other examples abound, like not following the Golden Rule, not tending to your career, and not tending to your family and friends. Recognizing and heeding warning labels that we can’t actually see is the key to living a healthy, wealthy, longer, and happier life.

Although you can’t see these warning labels, they are all around us in the form of articles like the one you are reading right now, in the form of self-help books, in many religious texts and venues, and in the context of the ethics and morals. For example, the 3rd commandment states “You shall not steal.” Consider that a warning label that can land you in jail for a very long time if you do not heed the label. Consider the idea of thinking rightly as you go about your daily life. Chances are that your conscience sees warning labels even before you see them – and usually it will tell you about it. It is that point in a decision to not follow that warning label that is buried that you get that sick feeling in your gut like you are about to do something wrong. Think of these as life’s warning labels.



- Mark M. Kowaleski