



"Then there's the always popular 'freak power outage.' This one is a real bummer. The guy's plugged the alarm in, remembered to turn it on, only to have the power company screw it all up for him."

MATT NEFF, *assistant superintendent,
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Never heard that one before

I have to admit that on some level I absolutely love some of the excuses people come up with for unexcused absences or tardiness. Sometimes they're so good, it almost makes the inconvenience of shuffling work assignments worth it — almost, but not quite.

I'm not talking about the run-of-the mill "I overslept" or "my car wouldn't start." That stuff happens from time to time. I'm talking about the truly valiant efforts at deception that clearly require considerable thought or creativity. I'm talking about excuses that make you wish the individual giving them would put that much thought and effort into their work.

In my experience, alarm clock "issues" are probably the most popular. That really shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. Alarm clocks are unbelievably complex instruments that can't be mastered with just a few uses. After all, an alarm clock has to be plugged in, the alarm has to be set for the correct time, and the alarm has to

be turned on. There's just so much that can go wrong.

My personal favorite alarm clock-related excuse is the "am/pm inversion," where the late employee claims he accidentally set his alarm for 5 p.m. instead of 5 a.m. Every guy who uses it thinks it's absolutely genius and that he's the first person to come up with it, when it's actually the worst-kept secret in the world of chronically late employees.

I suppose it's a slightly plausible excuse following a day off when the employee may have changed the alarm time. But considering many people use the alarm clock feature on their cell phones, most of which have the capability for multiple alarms, it's still pretty suspect.

Then there's the always popular "freak power out-

age." This one is a real bummer. The guy has done everything right — got it plugged in, managed to avoid the perilous am/pm inversion, remembered to turn it on — only to have that fickle mistress known as the power company screw it all up for him. If only alarm clocks had battery back-ups, this disaster could be avoided (See also: cell phones).

I also am a huge fan of overly specific or completely bizarre medical excuses. I could really do without the actual horrific details, regardless of how false they may be. It's the thinking behind it that I find entertaining. My theory with this one is that by being willing to subject himself to the embarrassment of admitting to his (ahem) bathroom troubles, his excuse will seem more credible. Obviously, people

occasionally get sick, but sometimes you just know it's completely made up.

When a guy who struggles to understand how to operate a weed eater suddenly calls one morning with an astoundingly intelligent description of his symptoms — complete with a med student-like grasp of anatomy and physiology — it's probably fair to assume he's actually lying in bed seriously regretting a few decisions he made at the bar the night before.

While I tend to believe that most people are pretty honest, I sometimes think the only people who get lied to more than supervisors, not just in this but in any profession, are policemen and people on Internet dating sites. I guess if you're a police sergeant with a Match.com account you probably don't trust anyone anymore.

I believe that most people want to do a good job. They want to be considered reliable employees. It's those few who couldn't care less who make it interesting for everybody else. At least they make it entertaining.

Oops, gotta go. I'm experiencing some pretty serious discomfort in the upper left quadrant of my abdomen. I'm afraid it might be splenomegaly, so I need to call off. Till next time...

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