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The Safety Committee Give employees a voice

Encouraging employee involvement in company safety committees can be a challenge. Even so, to create a workplace that fosters employee engagement, morale, and safety, employees must have a voice.

Depending on the specific workplace, some managers may face an uphill battle in achieving active employee participation in safety committees. Pressures of operational performance and overall lack of motivation can contribute to the difficulties of creating a productive safety committee.

In an attempt to evade these challenges, some managers might simply designate a worker as a safety committee member or co-chair to maintain the presence of a safety committee. Thrusting an unsuspecting employee into this position is an ill-advised move. Even worse is when the safety coordinator or a manager signs off as the employee representative, because this position should be held by a member of the work force.

Managers need to create an environment where employees feel free to speak up about safety issues and have a way to voice those concerns. Providing a seat at the table accomplishes this goal. Taking it away can create a culture of mistrust and the loss of respect. Furthermore, members of management must not compromise their own professional principles or the integrity of the safety committee by using the committee as a way to advance personal mandates or impose their own version of a safety policy.

Safe and professionally-minded employees result in safe and productive workplaces – this has been proven time and again. If management attempts to silence or avoid the voice of the employees, they could endanger the workplace. Employees will buy into a safety culture and accept new policy and procedures more readily and positively when they feel that their input is valued.

So give employees a voice. Create a culture of safety where employees speak up, communicate their concerns, and suggest safety improvements. Help them understand the role they play in keeping not only themselves, but their fellow coworkers, safe.

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If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter, or any ideas for future issues, contact Aaron Nowland at:

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Slips, Trips, and Falls-training is a must

OSHA maintains general industry regulations on walking/working surfaces that guard against hazards including clutter, protruding nails, splinters, holes, loose boards, and wet conditions. However, there are no formal training requirements. You must train your employees to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions, to be aware of the regulations applicable to their work, and to control or eliminate the hazards.

The following are safety messages you can communicate to your employees right away.

Slips

Slips can be caused by wet surfaces, spills, or weather hazards like ice and snow. Slips are more likely to occur when you hurry or run, wear the wrong kind of shoes, or don't pay attention to where you're walking. Employees can avoid slips by following these safety precautions:

- **Clean up spills right away. Even minor spills can be hazardous.**
- **Don't let grease accumulate in the shop.**
- **Be extra cautious of smooth surfaces such as new floors or newly waxed floors.**

Trips

Trips occur whenever your foot hits an object and you are moving with enough momentum to be thrown off balance. Employees are more likely to trip when you are in a hurry and not paying attention. Teach these rules to help employees avoid tripping:

- **Carry only loads that you can see over. Keep work areas well lit. Keep your job site clean.**
- **Store materials and tools in cabinets or assigned storage area.**
- **Keep working areas clear of loose extension cords. Tape them to wall supports or arrange them so they won't be in the way for other workers.**
- **Eliminate "loose footing" hazards on stairs, steps, and floors.**

Falls

Falls occur whenever you move too far off your center of balance. Consider the following measures:

- **Use proper equipment, such as ladders or step-stools, to reach elevated areas.**
- **Don't jump. Lower yourself from uneven surfaces.**
- **Check lighting. Make sure work sites are well lit.**
- **Repair or replace stairs or handrails that are loose or broken.**
- **Wear shoes with appropriate non-skid soles.**

Safety Meeting Tips

Why have safety meetings? How can you make them happen? And, when you do hold them, how can you be sure they are effective? Here are a few tips on conducting good, effective safety meetings

- Safety meetings are valuable part of your safety effort - they can offer advice and training, but more importantly they demonstrate how critical safety is to YOU.
- Safety meetings can be brief sessions, 10 or 15 minutes, given to all employees or small groups. Every company can deliver a safety message if they are committed and remain flexible.
- Single-topic meetings work best. Focus on a particular issue or topic and do not exceed a half hour. The most common safety meeting error is believing length of meeting proves value.
- Educate and encourage, offer new ideas, and most critically show how the employee can benefit from following some advice or guidance. Don't let the meeting get off topic, don't get preachy, but show some enthusiasm.
- Keep records of what you are doing. Multiple, short meetings held often mean you must track who has attended what session, and who needs to learn or hear some message. Write down topics covered, date, and track and maintain records of attendance.
- Consider using a short quiz to demonstrate comprehension of the topic by those in attendance.

SAFETY TIPS



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Avoid Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving, or more commonly referred to as road rage, is very prevalent on our highways and even town roads. Being in a vehicle can make people feel isolated and protected and turn the vehicle into an extension of themselves. Thus, they can perceive other drivers' intentional or unintentional actions as a personal attack. You can avoid dangerous and even deadly altercations with other motorists by learning about and overcoming aggressive driving behaviors and by avoiding other vehicles driving dangerously.

Common Aggressive Driving Behaviors

- Speeding up when someone tries to pass you
- Tailgating people who are going slower than you
- Weaving in and out of traffic; passing cars on the right
- Flashing your headlights or overusing your horn
- Making obscene gestures or yelling out your window
- Racing for a position on the highway

Be sure to avoid these behaviors if you find yourself in an aggressive driving situation. By practicing defensive driving and steering clear of aggressive drivers, you can avoid accidents and dangerous situations.

Ways to Avoid Road Rage

- Move over to another lane if someone is tailgating you. Don't block the passing lane.
- Use a friendly apology wave to diffuse a situation.
- Consider if you've done something and adjust your driving.

As a professional driver, you understand that driving safely and defensively is more important than getting ahead in traffic or winning an argument. Using simple courtesies can go a long way in making a positive driving experience for ourselves and others.

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Winter Driving Tips

Winter is fast approaching which brings hazardous travel conditions. Preparing yourself for winter weather challenges will reduce the stress of this driving season. Winter weather and driving in snow and ice is difficult. It tests your skills and professionalism. You must be mentally and physically prepared so that everyone can get home safely.

There are three core issues connected with operating a vehicle in winter weather conditions: limited traction, limited visibility, and personal safety.

Limited Traction – Rain, snow and ice dramatically affect your tires ability to maintain contact with the road surface. This limited traction will increase your vehicle's braking distance. To manage limited traction, consider these tips:

- Reduce your speed to correspond with road conditions. You must be cautious until you can determine how much traction you can expect from your tires.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Gently press the gas pedal to get the vehicle rolling. Stopping will take longer so slow down sooner than you normally would.
- Increase following distances. Extra space equals extra time to maneuver around vehicles.
- Beware of black ice, especially when the temperature is between 32 and 39 degrees. Pavement will appear as if it is wet but is actually ice in this temperature.

Limited Visibility –Falling snow and road spray can limit your view of the road and traffic in front of you. Clean windows and mirrors are vital in challenging driving conditions; if you can't see you can't drive safely.

- Clean your windows and mirrors at the beginning of the trip and during any rest stops or breaks. Don't start driving until the windows are defrosted and clean.

- Carry extra wiper fluid in the vehicle.
- Ensure that others can see you by clearing snow from headlights, brake lights, and marker lights.

Personal Safety – In cold weather, you obviously want to stay warm and avoid injury.

- Watch your step while entering or exiting the vehicle, especially on untreated parking lots and sidewalks.
- Dress for the weather. Wear layers of clothes that can be easily removed or added as needed.
- Keep the vehicle at a comfortable temperature. Being too hot or cold could distract you from driving.

Transportation is needed in even the coldest winter months. Some pre-planning and attention to detail will allow you to provide transportation services safely. Be aware of weather and highway conditions where you are dispatched. Take extra care in winter conditions and come home safely.

Healthy Holiday Habits

'Tis the season for eating: Thanksgiving feasts, Christmas dinner, New Year's Eve parties. Keeping your healthy eating habits in-check during the holidays is easy to do with these tips:

- ✦ Have a plan. Decide ahead of time that you are only going to eat certain foods or smaller portions.
- ✦ Don't go to a party on an empty stomach. Before heading out, eat something so you don't arrive hungry.
- ✦ Avoid alcohol on an empty stomach. Alcohol increases your appetite and diminishes your ability to control what you eat.
- ✦ Take a break. It takes time for your stomach to send the "I'm full" signal to your brain, so take a 10 minute break after finishing your first helping.
- ✦ Put on your dancing or walking shoes. Work off some calories by dancing at a party or going for a walk with family.



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Save Your Back - Lift Safely

Lifting things incorrectly can cause a variety of injuries to our backs and other parts of our body. Back strain is the most common type of lifting injury, but also hernias and wrist and elbow injuries. These injuries can be worse if we're not in good physical condition. Poor posture, lack of exercise, and stress, coupled with incorrect lifting, can be a hazardous combination.

The best lifters in the world are small children. As adults we should emulate the techniques they use automatically. Watch any small child and you will see him/her:

- Bend at the knees and keep his heads up when he squats
- Keep her back straight and lift with her legs
- Hold the load close to his body to get his arms around it
- Find stable footing so she won't fall and avoid twisting if she falls
- Let you know when it's too heavy by calling out for help

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Safe lifting involves learning how our back works and using the right methods whenever we lift anything larger than a toothbrush. There are several steps to take each time you lift:

Size up the load Look it over and decide if you need help. Often we look at something that is questionable and lift it anyway, rather than appear weak to others.

Inspect the area Before you begin moving things, make sure there are no obstacles in the way. Make sure you can turn without running into another object or stumbling over something on the floor.

Keep your back straight Bend at the knees not the waist. As we grow, we have a better sense of balance and forget to use our leg muscles to do the work. Bending at the waist puts a strain on the back.

Get a good hold Your grip has to be firm in order to move something efficiently. If you don't have a good hold on the item, it can slip out of your grasp and fall damaging the item and possibly you. Gloves will also help give you a better grip and keep your hands safe.

Find stable footing You will be able to keep your balance better and use your leg muscles more effectively. Leg muscles are stronger than your back muscles.

Lift close to the body Don't try to lift something that is away from your body; the object will feel heavier and you won't be able to get a good grip on it. Plus, reaching may strain your back..

Avoid twisting This may be the most violated fundamental of safe lifting. Use your feet to change directions. Always move with your whole body. Twisting your upper body to move an object will put additional stress on your back.

Teamwork It's easier and faster to have a helper in moving things. Be sure to discuss how you're going to lift, and what direction you're going in, and make sure that there are no obstacles. Lift, carry, and lower the object in unison. If you're losing your grip, warn your partner and put the load down, reposition yourselves, and then continue. A moment's pause may save dropping or injury.

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Stay on Guard

To be safe, you need be alert. One of the worst things that you can do is let your guard down while working by becoming preoccupied with other things, mostly your thoughts.

We all have personal problems that plague us from time-to-time— health, bills, the future – or perhaps preoccupation stemming from illness or fatigue. Such preoccupation is a major factor in many on-the-job mishaps that are sometimes mistakenly labeled “freak accidents”.

When you become lost in thought, you are off guard. You’ve let your defenses down and are wide open for an accident or injury. If a person is blind or deaf, he learns to compensate for his disability; his other senses become more alert and sharpened. When you are preoccupied you are blind and deaf, but don’t know it – and without the sharpened senses of a person with a hearing or seeing disability.

How do you guard against preoccupation? How can you detect that preoccupation has reached the point, either in

yourself or others, that you’re easy prey to hazards or hazardous conditions?

If we knew the answer to this, it would mean a major breakthrough in the field of safety.

It would be nice to be able to take a reading of someone’s brain waves to see if they were lost in thought and open to an accident. However, we don’t have that ability. So we must do the best we can by trying to make safety something that comes naturally to us, even when we are not consciously thinking about it.

By reinforcing safe work habits and behaviors, they will become second nature. That way, if you do become preoccupied, hopefully your safety habits will prevent you from having an accident. That’s your employers hope anyway – and the reason safety is such a fundamental value in the company. Reducing the possibility of accidents due to preoccupation is a matter of preventative safety, and a reason why we must stay on guard at all times on-the-job.

10 Commandments of Shop Safety

1. **Set Your Own Standards.** Don’t be influenced by people who ignore the rules. If you fail to wear safety glasses because others don’t, the blindness you may suffer will be yours alone to live with.
2. **Operate Equipment Only if Qualified.** Your supervisor may not realize you have not been trained to use that tool or machine. It’s your responsibility to speak up so the necessary training can be provided.
3. **Respect Machinery.** Machinery is helpful, but also dangerous, with the ability to pinch, crush, cut, etc. Make sure all guards are in place. Never hurry beyond your ability to think and act safely. De-energize the power before placing your hands in a point of operation.
4. **Use Your Initiative.** You are in the best position to see problems as they arise. Ask for the personal protective equipment or additional guidance you need.
5. **Get Answers.** If you are uncertain, ask questions. Do not accept answers that contain the words: I guess, I think, I assume.
6. **Lift Properly.** Most muscle and spinal injuries come from overexertion. Know your limits and do not exceed them. The few minutes it takes to do it right or get assistance will prevent weeks of being off work and in pain.
7. **Practice Good Housekeeping.** Disorganized work areas are the breeding grounds for accidents. You may not be the only victim. Don’t be the cause.
8. **Dress Properly.** Avoid loose clothing and dangling jewelry. Wear sturdy footwear that fully enclose the foot. Tie back long hair.
9. **Practice Good Hygiene.** Avoid touching eyes, face, and mouth with dirty hands or gloves. Wash hands well and use gloves and barrier creams if necessary when working with skin irritants.
10. **Be a Positive Part of the Team.** Willingly accept and follow safety rules. Your attitude and example play a role in the prevention of accidents and injuries.

CAREFUL!

**AVOID SLIPS, TRIPS
AND FALLS IN THE
WORKPLACE**



Fix UP

Poorly maintained facilities can lead to falls. Be on the lookout and:

- Maintain good lighting indoors and outdoors
- Check the condition of outdoor walkways and stairs
- Remove fallen leaves or snow right away



Gear UP

The items you use and wear can help reduce slips and falls. Make sure to:

- Wear sensible footwear
- Stand on ladders not chairs or tables
- Install handrails on stairs

Pick UP

Having items in the walkways can trip people. Make sure to:

- Take care of spills promptly
- Remove clutter from walkways
- Keep cords out of traffic areas



REDUCE

Slips, Trips and Falls

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