

Pointers for Successful Safety Talks

Safety talks are opportunities for your organization to reinforce the importance of safety on the job. Safety talks with staff and coworkers come in all forms. Examples include tool box talks, safety huddles at the start of a work shift, a safety moment presented at the opening of scheduled meetings, tier meetings, and during site safety stand down events. Safety talks are usually informal and short, lasting 5 to 10 minutes. This one pager provides pointers to ensure your safety talks are effective and beneficial.

SCHEDULE SAFETY TALKS REGULARLY

When possible, conduct safety talks at regular frequencies. They can happen at the start of each group meeting, the start of each shift, or once daily, weekly, or monthly. The frequency of holding safety talks is your choice, but consider the workplace and job tasks when choosing how often. More hazardous workplaces and job tasks may need more frequent safety talks. Holding safety talks on a consistent basis demonstrates your organization's commitment to safety and strengthens your safety culture, especially when you include all levels of your organization, not just front-line employees.

USE SAFETY TALKS TO INFORM AND INSPIRE WORKERS

Use safety talks to remind employees of the importance of safety and health (S&H) on the job, reinforce previously-taught training information, and communicate new safety information. Use the safety talks to encourage positive behaviors and attitudes, pointing out when employees practice safety behaviors. Allow employees to express concerns and provide improvement ideas to motivate them to work safely and show the organization is considerate of their suggestions.



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SAFETY TALK IDEAS

It is important to integrate relevant information and current issues into your safety talks. Ideas include:

- S&H hazards specific to your environment/tasks
- Protective measures and controls
- Best practices
- Recent mishaps and near-misses
- Newly identified hazards
- Workplace changes affecting safety
- Updated safety regulations and the impact on the workplace
- Organizational safety trends
- Seasonal risks (e.g., heat stress, icy walkways, holiday safety tips) at the appropriate time of year
- Non-routine job tasks and hazards
- Demonstrations of processes or equipment, including the use of safety gear and personal protective equipment
- Personal S&H topics of interest (e.g., home product recalls, hobbies, home safety, safety during local events)

DOCUMENT SAFETY TALKS

Your documentation demonstrates the organization's ongoing commitment to employee safety. It is advised to document your safety talks via a sign-in sheet or attendance roster. Document the date, topics covered, the presenter, and those who attended. Attach any relevant documents used to facilitate the talk (e.g., fact sheets, newsletters).

CONSIDER WHO PRESENTS

The person(s) presenting the safety talk depends on the message to communicate. Be sure the appropriate person is delivering the message and can answer any questions arising during the talk. You may want to have employees be the presenters to get them involved in S&H, since they typically have the expertise and knowledge of how the work is performed; just make sure they can answer questions and effectively convey the information.

FOLLOW THESE COMMUNICATION TIPS

Effectively communicating S&H information is the key to a successful safety talk. Remember, employees learn in different ways—some are better at listening, while others are better at seeing or doing. It is a good idea to use a combination of communication techniques during safety talks so workers can better remember and apply the information as needed. Follow these communication tips:



- **Present; don't read a script** – Present the safety talk to keep the audience's attention and interest. Do not read from written notes or a paper, as employees can easily get lost in the details. Don't lecture or dictate, simply talk directly to your audience.



- **Tell a story** – Grab the audience's attention by telling a story to which they can relate (e.g., hazardous situation, making a choice).



- **Use a demonstration** – If possible, show the audience how to perform a work task safely (e.g., inserting ear plugs, checking a machine guard), using props to make a point. Consider a hands-on demonstration if time allows.



- **Be positive** – Focus on the actions taken to continually improve workplace safety. Talk about the work in progress to address safety issues.



- **Keep it brief** – Explain why the topic is important and stress the key points you want the audience to take away from the talk. If warranted, tell them where to find additional information on the subject.



- **Provide time for questions** – Encourage questions to make the talk more interactive, promote understanding, and feel more conversational. Ask the audience questions during the safety talk to ensure they received and understood the message as intended.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.

PRESENTER IDEAS

- **Supervisor:** Organizational changes, observations made during walkthroughs and inspections, recent near-misses and mishaps
- **Safety Office:** Recently discovered hazards, inspection findings, corrective actions taken
- **Upper management:** Organization's commitment to safety, organizational safety goals and objectives
- **Employees:** Safety information in hazard analysis forms or standard operation procedures, safety