

HOW TO TRAIN EFFECTIVELY

HOW TO TRAIN EFFECTIVELY USING SAFETY MEETINGS

Safety meetings make a safety program take off and take root. They're a key part of safety training and, most important, the best way to motivate workers to get safety out of the classroom and on to the floor.

Yet many supervisors hold few safety meetings and aren't very happy with the ones they do conduct. They feel that the meetings seem to fall short of the mark, but they don't know why-or what to do about it.

YOU CAN RUN GOOD SAFETY MEETINGS

Any supervisor can become a safety meeting pro. The key is to understand how to plan and deliver meetings that get results.

This section will explain how to do just that in a step-by-step process that shows you how to plan, deliver, and evaluate your meetings. Once you understand the "how to" of safety meetings, you'll have the skill and confidence to share your working knowledge with your employees. You'll be able to make your safety meetings what they can and should be: an interesting and effective way to get the safety message across - and keep your workers safe and healthy.

SAFETY-MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Safety training and enforcement have become an increasingly important part of every supervisor's job. Workers need more training-and especially more ongoing training-to be able to handle their jobs correctly, efficiently, and safely. Equipment is more complex, and the hazards of both substances used on the job and of operations are better known. In addition, many companies now expect workers to be able to perform a wider variety of tasks.

Lack of training, especially safety training, is also very costly. Companies are trying hard to build and hold on to business by improving productivity and quality. Unsafe procedures are often reflected in poor and inefficient work habits, which make productivity and quality improvements hard to achieve. Unless workers are trained-and motivated to use what they learn on the job-their employers will fall behind in today's very competitive marketplace - and workers' jobs will be at risk.

But a lack of safety training has more tangible costs. Workers and their employers pay dearly in injuries, illnesses, and even deaths, as well as property damages. Lost workdays, sick pay, insurance payments, and workers' compensation costs add up

quickly for companies of all sizes. The money that goes for those payments is not available for other, more beneficial, investments: higher salaries, new equipment, research and development.

Furthermore, consider the following:

- Government keeps passing new safety regulations and is stepping up its enforcement of both new and old regulations all the time.
- The costs of insurance and workers' compensation keep going up, and companies are looking harder for ways to reduce job-related illnesses, injuries, and claims.
- Highly publicized on-the-job accidents and injuries, as well as deaths and illnesses apparently related to workplace exposure to hazardous substances, have alerted everyone to the potential risks they face at work.

SAFETY TRAINING REGULATIONS

Safety training is no longer a "nice-to-have" program. It's absolutely mandatory for any company that wants to be productive and profitable. In fact, it's mandatory for almost any company, regardless of its goals, because of the many laws and regulations governing workplace safety that have been issued by federal and state governments in recent years.

The Hazard Communication Standard, also known as "Right to Know," is one of the most comprehensive sets of regulations, but it is far from the only one. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has countless regulations that affect the operations of every type of industry. And for any particular operation or process that somehow doesn't fall under a specific regulation, OSHA has what's known as the "General Duty Clause" of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. This catchall regulation states in Section 5, Duties, that:

a) *Each employer-*

(1) *shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to its employees.*

(2) *shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act.*

b) *Each employee shall comply with occupational safety and health standards and all rules, regulations and orders pursuant to this Act which are applicable to his own actions and conduct.*

Failure to know and live up to legal requirements has its own costs. In addition to fines,

legal expenses, and lost work time dealing with regulatory agencies, there have even been cases where employers who blatantly disregarded employee safety have received jail sentences.

These legal requirements, and the penalties imposed for not meeting them, are likely to become more strict. As more is learned about the potential hazards in the workplace, there is more pressure to provide workers with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves and others from risk.

SAFETY AND THE SUPERVISOR

As a supervisor, you don't set company policy. But you have a major responsibility for carrying it out. You are on the scene and can see when workers are complying with safety procedures and when they are not.

As your employer's representative to the workers you supervise, you are the front line in an increasingly complex task: making sure workers are able to do their jobs in a way that promotes safety and minimizes risk. That is both a personal responsibility to the individuals in your group and, in many instances, a legal obligation under OSHA and other regulations.

Your company may have comprehensive training for new hires or to introduce such major programs as Right to Know. But there are many, many safety regulations and perhaps even more safety risks on the job. No matter how comprehensive your company's training programs, they are not enough to ensure worker safety. You are responsible for introducing new equipment, processes, procedures, and substances to workers and for making sure they learn to use them correctly.

To become an automatic part of every worker's thinking and habits, safety has to be taught and reinforced on an ongoing basis. And that's where safety meetings come in.

SAFETY MEETINGS

Safety meetings provide opportunities to focus on specific hazards, operations, and attitudes. They allow supervisors and safety professionals to select topics and formats geared to the needs of a particular group.

Safety meetings can be formal, preannounced group presentations using videos, expert speakers, and other planned aids. Or they can be brief, informal one-on-one or small-group discussions and demonstrations designed to deal with problems or knowledge gaps that supervisors identify on the job.

Because supervisors are on the floor, observing and directing operations, they are best

able to determine the strengths and weaknesses of their operations and their workers. This knowledge, coupled with their own experience and responsibility for their units, makes supervisors the best choice to determine when and why safety meetings are needed.

HOW BLR'S SAFETY MEETINGS LIBRARY ON CD WILL HELP

This product was created to help safety managers, supervisors, and trainers make safety training work - to make them an effective vehicle to promote and teach on-the-job safety. This how-to section explains the following:

- The importance of safety
- Safety training regulations
- The supervisor's role in safety
- How to plan effective safety meetings
- How to choose a meeting type
- How to choose a meeting format
- How to develop a safety meeting schedule
- How to conduct effective safety meetings
- How to keep meeting records

BLR's *Safety Meetings Library* on CD also includes sample objectives, records, and checklists that you can customize to your needs and your company's formats. There are many suggestions on how to make your meetings more productive, interesting, and, most important, memorable. In other words, this CD-ROM can help you plan and conduct safety meetings that get the message across.

SAFETY MEETING OUTLINES

You will find a series of detailed outlines on a wide range of topics that you might cover in a safety meeting. They range from general employee safety responsibilities to safe use of hand tools to personal protective equipment to how to introduce a new machine or hazardous substance. These outlines are purposely flexible. They are intended to be adaptable to the widest range of situations and groups. You can add details from your own operations to the existing outlines or you can develop additional outlines based on the ones provided.

Many of the outlines also have checklists and "Do's and Don'ts" lists that you can modify or supplement to suit your circumstances. You can then copy them for workers attending the meeting, to be used as a review tool and an on-the-job reference and reminder.

YOUR SAFETY SUCCESS

Before you go on to the next section, go over the Safety Meetings Checklist to see how your current safety meetings measure up. You may want to refer back to this list after several months of using the guidelines in this product.

HOW TO PLAN YOUR SAFETY MEETINGS

While you, as a supervisor, are in the best position to know your own workers' training needs, you can't develop a safety meeting program alone. You need the support and input of others in the company: top management, safety professionals, worker safety committees, and other supervisors whose responsibilities and workers overlap with yours.

The broad objectives, mandate, and resources for safety training usually start at the top. But they're only words until you, and the others involved in implementing on-the-job safety, participate actively in turning words into actions.

MAKE ROOM FOR SAFETY

Your initial reaction to a management call for greater emphasis on safety may be to wonder how you're going to fit it in to your already overloaded list of responsibilities. But you'll discover that it doesn't take much time—even less time as you grow experienced - and that it eventually makes other parts of your job go more smoothly.

And don't forget that safety training is one of your key responsibilities, a responsibility that the abundance of government safety regulations makes more important every year. Your company is required to provide workers with a safe working environment and the training they need to protect themselves from hazards and accidents, and you are expected to be part of your company's effort to meet those requirements.

TRAINING ISN'T ENOUGH

Safety regulations don't just mandate training; they also require that workers follow both legislated and commonsense safety practices on the job. A company that trains workers in some aspect of safety, such as using appropriate protective clothing, but then doesn't enforce the use of such clothing on the job, is violating the law and will be penalized. And, of course, when workers don't practice safety, they are more likely to be injured, dangerously exposed to hazardous substances, or otherwise endanger themselves and others. These injuries are likely to be a lot more serious and expensive than any fines imposed for not complying with government regulations.

That's why safety meetings are such a critical part of any training program. They are the best means for ensuring that each individual worker knows how to do each part of his or her job safely - and uses that knowledge every day, without exception.

PLANNING SAFETY MEETINGS

When you plan a program of safety meetings, you have to structure it to meet the specific needs, strengths, and weaknesses of your workers. You have an advantage over outside safety professionals in this task because you know your audience and can determine what approach will work best for them.

Know Your Audience

As you start to plan the type, length, and format of your safety meetings, think about your workers in these terms:

- **Age.** Younger workers may have trouble taking their jobs, including the safety aspects, seriously. Older workers, on the other hand, may feel they already know it all and tune you out. Your approach will have to include ways to make it clear to workers that this is important to all of them, perhaps with dramatic examples of safety failures.
- **Educational level.** If you have many workers with limited formal education, or workers who do not speak English well or at all, your program will have to make heavy use of hands-on demonstrations and practice. You'll also have to make an effort to use language they can all understand. It may be helpful to involve an additional meeting leader who speaks the workers' native language if you do not.
- **Keep in mind that many people won't admit they can't read or understand English.** Be alert to your workers' ability - or inability - to understand written instructions and to comprehend English. Don't embarrass them; just be sure you are presenting information in a way they can grasp.
- **If your group includes workers with a wide range of educational backgrounds, your task is even more complicated.** You have to come up with an approach that gets the message across to the less educated without being so simplistic that it turns off other workers.
- **Experience with products, processes, and technology.** Again, you have to tailor your message to your audience. If workers are relatively inexperienced, you'll have to take a slow, step-by-step approach and limit each safety meeting to a very narrow topic area. Otherwise, you'll overload participants with more than they can take in at once.
- **Experienced workers will more readily understand your references to equipment and procedures, allowing you to focus more on the safety aspects and tie them together.** But experienced workers are also more likely to resist changes in the way they do their jobs, so you'll have to sell them on safety both in terms of their own health and well-being and legal requirements.
- **If your group is a real mix of experienced and inexperienced, you may want to consider asking some of the more senior workers to participate in parts of your presentation.** That will allow you to tailor basic elements of the meeting to the less

experienced group and get the more experienced workers to contribute without becoming bored. It may also help to reinforce the experienced workers' recognition of and commitment to the importance of safety.

- Tolerance for length and frequency of meetings. How long an attention span do your workers have? How long can they sit still and concentrate? How much can they absorb at once? You'll have to answer these questions to determine how often you can have safety meetings and how long they can last.
- The meeting format is also a factor in determining meeting length. People can't usually sit and concentrate as long for lectures as for videos or programs that involve them directly in practice.
- Another factor is how long you can keep how many workers off the job without seriously disrupting operations and upsetting deadlines.
- Extent of prior safety training. The more safety training workers have received, the easier each subsequent meeting becomes. Once workers understand certain safety basics and incorporate them into their jobs and workstyles, it's not as difficult to add new cautions and procedures. You can skip the preliminaries and some of the "safety sell" and get right to the specifics of your meeting.
- Attitudes toward work and management. If you have many workers who are hostile to you, the company, their jobs, and/or the meeting topic, safety meetings can be difficult. These workers will attend meetings only because they have to and will be reluctant participants in discussions and practice sessions.

If you have this problem, face it squarely at the beginning of the session. Allow workers to express their feelings and ask them to try to keep an open mind. Again, your best bet here is to emphasize that these programs benefit them by making accidents and injuries less likely. It also doesn't hurt to point out that all the regulations that require companies to provide safety training also require employees to practice the safety methods and practices they've been taught on the job.

KINDS OF SAFETY MEETINGS

Safety meetings come in all types and sizes, but most can be viewed as either formal or informal (or "tailgate") meetings.

Formal Meetings

The cornerstone of the safety training program is formal meetings, planned and announced in advance to provide groups of employees with information and training on specific issues, regulations, procedures, and hazard protections.

The topics to be covered in these meetings will be dictated by your observations of training needs and of gaps in following safety procedures and regulations. If you carry out periodic needs assessments to identify hazards and dangerous work practices on



the job, you'll have an ongoing list of potential safety meeting topics.

Company accident and injury records are another source of guidance for safety meetings. If there is a trend toward a particular type of accident or injury, or if even one serious accident has occurred, you have new safety meeting topic candidates. Be flexible. Even when you work out an advance schedule of safety meetings, other situations that call for safety meetings are likely to emerge. They may include:

- Recent accidents
- Changes in company or group safety trends
- New equipment, techniques, procedures, products, or hazardous substances
- Management directives to emphasize company, legal, or insurance requirements.

Informal or "Tailgate" Meetings

Formal meetings alone are not enough. You have to be alert to opportunities for informal training for individuals and small groups in response to habits and actions you observe on the job.

Many of these informal "tailgate" or "toolbox" meetings can still be planned. If you have noted a recurring problem among several employees, for instance, you can mentally assemble information on correct procedures, or, even better, make some notes. Then, when the employees are working on a related task, step in and provide some hands-on direction to show them how to do the job safely. Each such session should, however, focus on only one topic.

You may even have one-on-one safety meetings with workers who are failing to use, or don't seem to be aware of, safe procedures in certain aspects of their job.

Keep these meetings short - not more than 5 or 10 minutes. And have them frequently. That makes the meetings seem like part of the regular routine, rather than criticism and discipline, and it gives you continual opportunities to highlight safety.

Other Meetings Are Opportunities

Look for other opportunities for safety meetings or for highlighting the use of safe procedures on the job.

One possibility is holding annual or quarterly safety reviews to go over what has been covered in training and point out how it has translated into improved safety or productivity on the job. If such gains have not been realized, reviews are even more necessary.

Include safety in meetings called for other purposes. The more frequently a message is communicated, the more likely it is to be remembered.

Look for ways to continually tie the safety message to workers' day-to-day activities. For instance, you could review the basics covered in a recent safety meeting by pointing out how they were followed-or ignored-recently on the job. Examples might include a task performed safely and properly yesterday using toxic chemicals, an accident or near-miss in your department or another department, etc.

Look at safety as positive, not negative, and try to get workers to see it that way, too.

Seek out occasions to praise workers for incorporating safety on the job. Some companies give prizes or awards for achieving a certain number of accident-free days or months.

Reward groups as well as individuals. Have an annual or quarterly lunch or a doughnuts-and-coffee session. Hold impromptu sessions to honor workers who have done an outstanding job with safety-cleaning up a hazardous spill correctly, for instance. These "events" don't have to be expensive or elaborate. You can present the group or individuals with certificates, plaques, T-shirts, mugs, or other items honoring their achievement, or you can just credit them publicly for their efforts. The point is to make a point of it. Safety counts, and the people who practice safety count too.

CHOOSING A SAFETY MEETING FORMAT

Plan the format for each safety meeting to meet your overall objective and to get your particular topic message across. You'll probably use different formats for different topics. Here are the most common methods and tools used in this type of training.

Lectures

Lectures - where you or another speaker explain the information - should be only one part of your program. It's a good way to define the what and why of your meeting and to outline what you'll cover and how long it will take. But it shouldn't be the only method of explaining the material unless it's a very short meeting on a very limited and specific topic.

Lectures are best when broken up with audiovisuals, discussions, and/or hands-on participation.

Remember, too, that you're not the only possible person to address the meeting. Your company's safety personnel or other supervisors may be able to participate. You may want to invite top management to provide an introduction that underlines the importance



of good safety practices to the company. Outside experts on such topics as emergency response can provide valuable information and examples. Perhaps you can get a representative from your equipment manufacturer to demonstrate how a new piece of equipment works and answer questions.

If you are going to be the main speaker, try to outline what you want to say rather than reading a whole presentation. Look directly at your audience as you talk. It will be more conversational-and more interesting.

Audiovisual Presentations

Audiovisual presentations are a good way to get people's attention and to demonstrate both the potential problems posed by your topic and the correct way to do things. PowerPoint® presentations for several topics are available on this CD. (BLR, publisher of this CD, also has other training CDs and videos.)

If you have a digital camera or a video camera, you can make any topic more relevant by illustrating it with pictures or videos of your work area. Take pictures of equipment, procedures, etc., you want to focus on. If you're planning a safety talk on housekeeping, take pictures of good and bad examples in your department. The message is sure to be more personal when people see themselves and their work area and equipment highlighted in this way.

You may also need to create some visuals as you go. A large flipchart and felt-tipped marker are useful for highlighting or outlining information during the safety meeting.

Programmed Instruction

Programmed instruction - reading material and written exercises - can be effective supports to the other parts of your safety meeting. If your audience is accustomed to reading and able to handle written question-and-answer formats, use books and workbooks to reinforce the learning and to test how well workers have absorbed the information.

Demonstrations

Demonstrations should be included whenever possible in safety meetings. Show the correct way to perform an operation. Use real labels, material safety data sheets, etc., when you explain what they cover and what the information means. Have protective clothing and equipment with you as examples. Not only is "a picture worth a thousand words," but also these real-life examples are an excellent way to tie the training to on-the-job application.



Hands-on Practice

Hands-on practice is recommended whenever possible. It gives workers a chance to try out the methods, equipment, etc., you're covering and it gives you a chance to see how they use them and make corrections on the spot in a no-risk environment.

When you're conducting a session that includes hands-on practice, take it slowly, step by step. First explain the procedure, then demonstrate it. Highlight key points, then allow each participant to try.

If there seems to be general difficulty with some specific task or concept, go back to the beginning and demonstrate again, then ask for questions. Stay with it until all workers have had a chance to try-and master-the new skill, approach, or equipment. Give them immediate feedback on what they do right and immediate assistance when they have difficulties. Then follow up within a few days to see if they still know how to do the task correctly and to find out if they have any questions.

Discussion

Discussion is an excellent way to find out whether workers understand your message and to respond to any questions or problems. If possible, involve other safety personnel, supervisors, and/or outside experts in discussion sessions.

It's important, however, that you or the other leaders always control the discussion so that it reinforces what's being covered in the meeting.

Here are a few hints for effective discussions:

1. **Always answer questions.** If you don't have the information, make a note of the question, find out the answer, and get back to the person who asked it.
2. **Prepare ahead.** Open discussion doesn't always come easily. Prepare some questions to get the ball rolling. If no one volunteers an answer, call on people individually to respond.
3. **Don't pass judgment on answers.** If someone gives an incorrect response, correct it without comment. If an answer may be a matter of judgment, give people a chance to voice different opinions.
4. **Compliment good responses or observations.** You don't have to overdo it, but be sure people get positive feedback when it's deserved.
5. **Keep the discussion on the topic.** It's easy to wander into side issues that make no contribution to mastering the safety topic at hand.
6. **Continually relate what you're discussing to the job.** Ask participants for examples of related problems they've had or ways they've handled situations like the ones you're discussing.



Use discussion periods to get a feel for how well participants understand the general and specific areas covered by the meeting and to determine whether you need to go back over some things or even have another meeting.

Handouts

Handouts covering the topic are very useful on-the-job reminders. But don't hand them out until the end of the session or they will just be a distraction to participants. Examples of useful handouts could include a copy of the agenda you covered or an outline of the topics, a safety newsletter, a prepared list of safety tips on the subject, etc.

At the end of formal meetings on complex or especially important topics, such as the Hazard Communication Standard, you may want to give participants certificates stating that they completed the safety program. That makes it seem even more official and important.

See the interactive training certificate elsewhere in this product.

DEVELOPING A SAFETY MEETING SCHEDULE

Setting a schedule for safety meetings allows you to plan, get approvals, and assemble information and materials. Planning also usually means a better organized, more effective meeting.

Companies vary on how much authority they grant supervisors to plan and execute programs like safety meetings. Sometimes the directive to schedule such meetings will come from management or from company safety managers. If you are asked by management to plan and conduct meetings, work with your manager and any assigned safety professionals to develop a list of topics and times.

Be sure you follow your company's policies and get approvals from all required parties. If you're not sure what policy, if any, exists, find out. Going through approved channels with a schedule of safety meetings that helps meet important company objectives can provide you with valuable recognition from management. Failing to follow policy can create unnecessary problems and slow safety training in needed areas.

Even if you're developing a schedule on your own for your own group, it's a good idea to run it past your manager and any safety officials or committees in your facility. They may suggest additional topics or may be able to provide assistance in one or more of the programs you've planned. They also may have some objection to something on your schedule-and it's better to discover that early so you can work it out.

Try to plan safety meetings six months to a year ahead. You might change the schedule

as new issues emerge, but an advance schedule helps you to think about exactly what you want to cover and to look for examples, speakers, and materials that will help you get the message across.

A typical safety meeting schedule will include both topics the company identifies as important (e.g., new regulations, tasks with high accident rates, new equipment), as well as those you have spotted as weaknesses in your own area (e.g., use of respirators, lockout procedures, material handling).

Your records of accidents and illnesses are also an important source of topics.

SETTING YOUR OBJECTIVES

There are innumerable reasons to hold safety meetings, and they can originate with supervisors, management, or with government agencies that institute new regulations.

Every safety meeting has its own specific objectives-the results you hope to achieve-but most also are designed to meet broader objectives that are part of the company's and supervisor's overall agenda. Such objectives might include:

- Developing a safety mindset among workers
- Addressing specific company safety needs.
- Improving productivity by reducing accidents.
- Reducing costs resulting from injury and illness.
- Training employees to recognize and report hazards.
- Bringing new employees into line with company safety emphasis and practices.
- Training employees to recognize and avoid unsafe practices.
- Training employees to automatically incorporate safety into routine work procedures.
- Explaining how to prevent or minimize injuries on the job.
- Training employees how to respond to emergencies.
- Providing smooth and safe introductions of new equipment, procedures, and substances.
- Reinforcing previous training.
- Achieving compliance with federal and state safety regulations.

Each actual meeting's objectives should be very specific, stating what you want workers to be able to do or to know after the training is completed. Your objective should also state how you will measure or define when the workers have actually reached that goal.

For example, a company safety objective might be:

Train employees to prevent on-the-job injuries.

The specific meeting objective might be:

Train employees how to prevent hand injuries by wearing proper protective clothing and using machine guards. The result should be that all trained employees wear gloves when required on the job and always have machine guards in place, with no reported hand injuries in the next quarter.

Safety meetings will accomplish more if these objectives are stated clearly and understood by everyone in advance. This enables you to make sure that each safety meeting meets both immediate needs and overall, long-term company and unit objectives.

SETTING YOUR PRIORITIES

Evaluate your safety meeting program objectives and set priorities for specific topics that will best help you meet those objectives. You can't do everything at once, so focus on what's most important to you and your company now and also what is likely to have the most immediate impact.

If, for instance, a key objective is improving productivity by reducing accidents, your priority should be safety meetings on correct procedures for the operations where accidents are most frequent.

If a key objective is recognizing and reporting hazards, your meetings might group common hazards so they can be explained, demonstrated, and emphasized.

Make safety meeting topics as specific as possible. It's more effective to have a meeting on, say, using dollies and hand carts properly than on material handling safety.

Talk to other supervisors. If they share your safety training needs, there may be opportunities to combine safety meetings. Consulting with other supervisors can also help you avoid scheduling a meeting when workers or facilities you need are tied up or at a time when such a meeting might disrupt other operations.

When you're working on management approval for your schedule, consult with your manager on how much and when to tell workers about the planned meetings.

If possible, it's a good idea to let workers know your intentions and even involve them in selecting topics. If they have areas they're not comfortable with or where they feel more training is required, try to include those subjects on the schedule, or at least note them for the next round of safety meetings.

Once the schedule is approved, post it if company policy permits. This gives workers an opportunity to think about the topics and it emphasizes the importance you place on safety.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRAINING

Here are some other useful tips for trainers.

- Notify participants well in advance of the date, time, and location of the safety meeting. Tell them how long it will last and make sure they know attendance is a "must."

Note:

It's usually better to schedule meetings in the morning when people are most alert. Many people are sluggish after lunch. Later in the afternoon, they may pay more attention to the clock than to the meeting program. It's also a good idea to schedule meetings early in the week so that what was learned can be put right to work and you can provide immediate feedback to individuals on whether they're applying their new safety knowledge.

- Confirm attendance with each individual the day before the meeting.
- Decide where you will hold the training and make sure there are comfortable chairs for everyone and room for any materials you want to display, audiovisual equipment, etc. Select a location where you won't be disturbed or distracted. Prepare a "Do Not Disturb" sign for the door if needed. If necessary, reserve the training area for your use.

Note:

Some safety meetings, such as those to introduce new equipment, have to be held on the plant floor. You'll have to do some extra planning to make sure your meeting won't interrupt work schedules and that you won't be interrupted by other workers. For instance, perhaps you can schedule such sessions during lunch hour and give the meeting participants a different lunch break.

- Assemble any equipment-audiovisuals, flip charts, samples of protective clothing or material safety data sheets, handouts, etc.-in advance.
- Make sure you know how to use any video equipment or that someone else is available to do so.
- Determine in advance how long the meeting should take and try to stick within the time frame unless participants get sufficiently involved to make it worth running longer.

- Vary your presentations. Try to make each meeting memorable by focusing one meeting around demonstration and practice, the next around audiovisuals and discussion, etc.
- Rehearse your presentation. That way, you'll be more confident and more conversational when you talk. Have an outline to refer to so you don't miss anything important.

 **Note:**

Make sure you let participants know what you'll be covering and why it's important at the beginning of the meeting.

- Be enthusiastic. If you seem to be just going through the motions, workers probably won't take the training seriously or pay close attention.
- Think about any problems you might encounter, such as unruly or hostile participants, and decide how you'll handle them.
- If you want to encourage group participation, develop questions in advance that can get discussions going. Be sure your questions can't be answered by "yes" or "no" or your discussions will fall flat. Ask employees for examples that relate to what you're discussing to get them involved.
- If you'll be sharing the meeting presentation with others, meet with them in advance to plan who's going to do what.

 **Note:**

No matter how many people are giving presentations, one person should be in charge of the meeting, including seeing that the agenda is followed.

- Get to the meeting early to make sure you have everything you need. Put up any posters or charts and set up video equipment. Arrange chairs so everyone can see videos, posters, etc. If the meeting is expected to be fairly long, have coffee or water available. Arrange for phone messages to be taken during the meeting. If you've taken the time to organize, you'll be more relaxed when the participants arrive-and ready to start on time.
- Focus the program on participants' jobs; make sure they realize the training has direct impact on them.

HOW TO CONDUCT YOUR SAFETY MEETINGS

A good trainer is not unlike a good supervisor. Training requires familiarity with the procedures and topics covered in the training sessions and an ability to communicate

with others. In fact, in many ways, you are training workers all day when you provide direction on how to perform various jobs or correct employees and show them proper procedures. But training is a more focused activity than many supervisory tasks. A couple of old slogans are useful.

1. **Be prepared.** Know your subject. Prepare yourself by reading, talking to safety personnel and other supervisors, and observing any problems in how workers are currently dealing with the particular topic on the job. Assemble examples, materials, and anything else you can think of that will help you get the message across.
2. **The KISS rule.** The so-called KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) rule is a good one for training. You have a particular message that you have to get across to a group, so it's important to deliver that message in a way that everyone can grasp. Don't give people more than they can absorb in one sitting.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Communication is an important part of every supervisor's job, and it's an essential skill if you want your workers to understand the importance of safety and how it fits into their jobs. It's not enough just to say the words: You have to be sure your listeners get the message.

The communication skills that go into instruction and motivation are such everyday parts of your job you may not give them much thought. But a great deal of study has been done to determine the skills and traits of the best communicators. Many are things you already do instinctively. Others are easy to add once you're aware of them. Improving your communication abilities will not only help you instill in workers a strong safety message; it will help you get your messages across to others both at work and in your personal life.

Effective communication has two parts: what you say and how you say it. To begin with, it's important to stick to the topic-the meeting objective. If you get sidetracked, your listeners could end up with pieces of a lot of different messages rather than the specific message of your meeting.

What you say also depends on your audience. Put yourself in their shoes. You know their attitudes, their attention span, their sense of humor. Try to get on their wavelength so that they'll be more open to hearing what you have to say. Think in advance about the examples you'll use to connect that topic to workers' jobs.

The effectiveness of your message-what you say-depends on how you say it. Tape record a safety meeting presentation and try to listen to yourself objectively. How would

you respond if you were a worker at that meeting? Would you get the message? Would you be motivated?

Tips for Effective Presentations

If you're not fully satisfied with how you sound, here are some "tricks of the trade" that professional speakers use. These tips are not complicated, but they will help you be more comfortable and effective in front of an audience.

- **Don't talk at or down to your listeners.** Assume that you're all intelligent people who think safety is important.
- **Use clear language.** Don't try to "fancy up" your presentation. Use the same language you would in normal conversation.
- **Make eye contact.** If you constantly look down at a piece of paper or out at a spot on the wall, your audience will get distracted. Look people in the eye, moving your gaze around the audience.
- **Use a warm, friendly tone.**
- **Use a moderate pace and volume of speech**—not too fast or slow, not too loud or soft.
- **Sound firm and convinced.** When you make a statement, don't let your voice trail into a question. And don't add qualifiers ("but," "except when," etc.).
- **Watch your body language.** If you cross your arms in front of you while you talk, you look defensive. If you keep playing with a pencil or tapping your foot, you look nervous.
- **Watch the audience's body language** and pace your talk accordingly. Crossed arms or legs are defensive for them, too, which may indicate they're resisting your message. Leaning forward, on the other hand, indicates interest.
- **Get feedback** to make sure your message is getting through. Respond to questions. If no one asks, ask them questions. Give people time to form what they want to say. If you just say, "Any questions?" and then instantly move on, you're saying you really don't want any. Asking specific questions is the best way to check understanding of what you've said. (Note: The discussion questions in the safety meeting outlines can help you here.)

Listening

Communication is a two-way street. Your message has to reach its audience, and they have to respond in some way. So a good communicator is not just a good speaker; he or she is also a good listener. A good listener hears what the other person is saying and lets the person know that he or she has been heard. When you really listen, you not only learn a lot about your workers' knowledge and concerns. You also demonstrate that what they think and feel is important to you.



A good listener:

- **Listens.** Don't interrupt or ask questions until the person has had his or her say.
- **Looks at the person speaking.** Give the speaker the same attention you hope to receive when you speak.
- **Clarifies for understanding.** To be sure you understood what the other person said, rephrase it and ask if you understood correctly. (For instance, "You're saying this. Is that right?")

Feedback

Once you are certain that you can listen well, the next step, feedback, will be easy and obvious. You probably give feedback-praise and constructive criticism-routinely on the job, and it should also be incorporated into your safety meetings.

Everyone wants to be known and treated as an individual, and giving feedback enables you to let your workers know you recognize them and their work. It also lets you guide their work, including their safety efforts, in the proper directions.

Positive feedback, or praise, is often underused or used improperly. It's easy to assume that people don't need a pat on the back for doing what they're supposed to do. But, if you want them to keep on doing what's right, you have to let them know that you notice and think it's important. So give credit when it's due-and as soon as it's due. Say exactly what action or statement was important-and why. Give credit for correct responses to questions you raise at safety meetings-especially if they make the connections between concepts and on-the-job use. Credit good questions, too; they show the worker is paying attention and really wants to gain-and use-safety knowledge.

When you see workers using proper safety procedures on the job, tell them you've noticed and are impressed by their mastery of new skills and their efforts to improve your department's safety record. It's important to do this with workers who always do things properly as well as those who show improved safety awareness. When people are praised for behavior, they'll repeat it.

Constructive Criticism

Of course, sometimes you have to criticize or correct your workers. Constructive criticism can, when done properly, improve behavior and learning without making the worker defensive.

The key to effective constructive criticism is to focus on specific, observable,

performance-related behaviors and the problems they create. Don't attack the individual whose performance was faulty.

Suppose, for instance, that a worker's question during a safety meeting indicates that he or she missed or misunderstood your point. Don't attack or ridicule the questioner. Correct the misunderstanding in a matter-of-fact tone. Credit the person for demonstrating interest by asking a question. Then explain that your point was apparently misunderstood and repeat it, preferably with a clear example. Ask the person to repeat the point back to you in his or her own words to make sure you got the message across this time.

If, on the job, you see someone not following safety procedures or using safety equipment properly, immediately set the person straight in a helpful way. Don't be accusatory. Make your criticism out of earshot of other workers to avoid embarrassment.

The point of criticism is not what was done wrong but what should be done. Phrase your criticism in a way that assumes the person wants to do it right. If possible, lead with something positive about the worker's action ("I'm glad to see you protecting yourself by wearing gloves..."). Then (without a "but" or "however" in the middle to put the listener's guard up) explain specifically what was done wrong and why it's important. ("The substance you're working with could have potentially toxic vapors, too. You can protect yourself and the rest of us even better if you always keep the container closed when you're not using it.")

If appropriate, end the discussion by asking the worker to agree to take the right action: close the container, put on the protective equipment, etc. And conclude by expressing your confidence that the worker has the knowledge and desire to do it right.

Discipline

You may occasionally encounter a worker or situation that calls for more drastic measures—for instance, an individual who continually disrupts safety meetings or refuses to follow safety procedures. You have to take action that makes it clear that you can't allow anyone to create a safety risk.

Discipline, like the other forms of feedback, works best if it's an immediate response to a specific observed action. And, of course, the punishment has to "fit the crime."

Suppose a worker regularly disrupts safety meetings or makes negative remarks for all to hear. Take the person aside immediately after a meeting where this has occurred. State firmly that the information covered in this meeting is essential to the health and safety of the whole department. Make it clear that you can't risk having people missing

out on what they need to know because of this person's actions or attitude.

Provide the troublemaker with information on the meeting topic to read at home. Then make a date for the two of you to get together-perhaps the next day at lunch-to review what he or she has learned. Make the point that you expect everyone to be responsible for safety.

You might take a similar approach for a worker who consistently ignores safety on the job. Be sure to let the worker know that you will personally be looking out for improved performance in the future.

SAFETY TRAINING FOR WORKERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Safety training is supposed to help workers understand how to work safely and motivate them to use what they learn on the job. That's a pretty tall order for all supervisors and workers. But the challenge is even greater when workers have special needs. It's not unusual for supervisors to have to train workers who:

- Understand and speak very little English
- Have minimal reading ability, though they speak and understand English
- Are hearing impaired
- Have a learning disability.

These workers have several things in common. They're all likely to miss important points during safety meetings. They're also all likely to try to hide their lack of understanding-perhaps even from themselves. In fact, people with learning disabilities or hearing impairments may not even know they have a problem.

All these people will find safety meetings frustrating and embarrassing. They may make them tune out even what they can understand. The result will be troubling gaps in your unit's ability to work safely.

Fortunately, a variety of techniques can help you reach all these workers. The same techniques can help improve communication with workers without special needs, too.

Simple, Visual Communication

Follow these three rules. They can boost the odds of getting your message across to all workers.

1. **Speak slowly and clearly.** Use the shortest and simplest words you can.

People who have trouble with English will understand more when you speak

slowly and clearly. Such speech is also easier for the hearing-impaired to lip read. In addition, it gives people with some learning disabilities the time they need to process your words.

Simpler words are always better. They're especially important for people with a limited English vocabulary. More people will understand "may cause cancer" than "carcinogenic."

2. **Use as many posters, videos, and other visual aids as possible.**

The more ways you communicate a point, the more likely people are to get it. Studies also indicate people retain what they see better than what they hear.

When you mention an item—a respirator, a machine guard, etc.—point to it. When you make a point about safety, point to the overhead that restates it.

Look for safety topic illustrations. Ask your safety department for posters, videos, and other materials.

3. **Demonstrate it, don't just say it.**

Sometimes it's easier to do something than to explain it. It's even better to do both. Suppose, for example, your topic is how to put on PPE. In that case, demonstrate each step as you say it.

Another approach is to have workers role play, or act out, a safety procedure. You could demonstrate how to put on PPE properly, then ask someone to repeat the steps. Or ask a group to perform a lockout/tagout procedure or inspect an area for housekeeping problems.

A video camera is a great safety training tool. People with limited language skills or hearing can learn from videos. Videos also let you freeze or repeat a particular scene to make a point. Make videos of workers on the job. Show people doing a task safely and unsafely, correctly and incorrectly. If you don't see the good examples you need, ask for volunteers. Have them perform a job correctly as "stars" in your safety movie.

All these forms of practice will help workers understand and remember what they're expected to do. They also give you a chance to identify—and then correct—general or individual knowledge gaps.

Reaching Out to Meet Special Needs

Find ways to help individuals with particular needs get more out of safety training—or any



communication.

Hearing impaired people depend a lot on lip reading. Give them seats up front in a meeting. Always face your audience as you talk. If you have to turn to point at something, stop and point and say nothing. Then turn toward the group again to complete your explanation.

Written materials also help the hearing impaired. Before the meeting, provide a copy of the handout or even your own outline. Then they can follow along as you speak.

Learning disabilities are very varied. You may not know who has one or what type of disability a person has.

Don't try to define problems or single people out. Use an indirect approach when, for example, you announce a safety meeting. Emphasize that this is something everyone must know and understand. Explain that you realize everyone processes information differently. Ask workers to talk with you privately if they want written back-up materials, permission to tape safety meetings, one-on-one reviews, etc.

Non-English-speaking workers can be a challenge. Some know a little English. Some understand what you say even if they can't speak the language.

A little English and a lot of demonstration can deliver simple safety messages like housekeeping. But that's not enough for more complex topics, such as confined spaces.

If many workers speak the same language, try to have your handouts translated for them. The ideal translator is a member of your group who is fluent in English and the second language. That person might also act as interpreter during safety meetings.

Your workers may speak several languages. That's a greater problem. Multiple translations can cost a lot of time and money, if you can get them at all.

If that's your situation, consider assigning experienced "buddies" to non-English-speaking workers. They can use demonstrations and hands-on practice to teach people how to do some tasks safely.

But what about warning signs, labels, and material safety data sheets? Workers must understand them in order to work safely. If you don't have these materials in their language, encourage workers to learn English to protect themselves.

Some companies sponsor English classes on-site after work hours. Others arrange for



trained volunteer tutors to help their employees. Local schools or literacy organizations may work with the company to develop learning materials that relate to students' jobs. People often learn better when the information has meaning to them.

If your facility doesn't offer such programs, find out what's available locally. Many communities offer evening Adult Education English classes. They're often free or very inexpensive. Let your workers know when and where these classes are held.

Illiterate workers are more common than you think. Millions of native-born Americans can't read or write English well, if at all.

These workers will also get more out of safety meetings that feature simple language, audiovisuals, and demonstrations. They have usually developed an impressive ability to concentrate and memorize to disguise their inability to read.

But like non-English speakers, they will work more safely, productively, and confidently if they learn to read and write.

Most communities have classes for people who need to increase these important skills. Your company may want to sponsor them on-site or refer people to local programs.

One caution, however. People who can't read or write are very sensitive and defensive. Don't single individuals out or use the word "illiterate." Instead, point out that staying safe today requires everyone to become more comfortable with written technical information. Emphasize the value that you and the company put on upgrading such skills. Explain where to go for classes and tutoring to improve the skills that are vital to your department's changing needs.

Follow-Up Counts

Follow-up is, of course, an important part of all safety training. It's especially critical for workers with special needs. You'll only know if they understood the training if you observe them on the job.

As you make your regular "rounds," keep an eye on how people perform. Ask questions and correct any problems you see. Give positive feedback to people who are doing it right. Positive feedback is especially motivating for people who have to work a little harder than most to master the information.

Encourage workers to ask you about anything they don't understand. Make yourself available for individual "review" sessions when they're needed. They will take a little extra time, but are well worth it if they achieve your safety goals.

General Meeting Format

While each meeting should and will be different, these guidelines will help you grab participants' attention and make your meeting flow more smoothly. You will also be more relaxed and confident when you get used to following a general format.

- Begin the meeting by explaining what you'll cover and why it's important. Try to use an anecdote or other "warm-up" to get people interested and relaxed.
- Position the meeting in terms of company safety objectives. Mention any relevant safety trends at the company or in the industry or any applicable regulations. Emphasize top management's commitment to safety and endorsement of this safety meeting program.
- Keep your tone informal during the meeting. It encourages participants to feel less distant and more involved in what's going on. A little humor may be appropriate, especially in a long meeting where workers may begin to feel overwhelmed by all they're learning. Let them know you appreciate that this is an effort.
- Stick to your agenda. Be flexible enough to respond to questions or concerns you haven't thought of, but don't let the meeting go off into unrelated areas. If a lot of questions and concerns are voiced on a certain topic, note it as one that might require its own safety meeting.
- Give examples of violations of safety rules and their consequences. Be as dramatic as possible while keeping your examples realistic. Hammer away at the risks to which employees expose themselves and others by not following the rules and not taking advantage of the engineering controls, protective equipment, etc., available to them.
- Summarize continually as you go along. Try to connect any "theoretical" subjects (handling spills, proper lifting techniques, etc.) with actual events or tasks in your work unit. Be sure people see the value of what you're talking about.
- Refer to specific examples whenever possible. Demonstrate with labels, protective clothing, etc. Make your meetings as "show and tell" as possible.
- Ask regularly for examples and questions. If anyone is skeptical about the importance or relevance of your topic, deal with it immediately. If possible, get other workers to explain to the skeptic and the group why they think this safety issue is important to them.
- End each safety meeting with a wrap-up that summarizes what was covered. It's also valuable to thank the participants for their interest and involvement.
- Be specific about what you expect employees to do as a result of this meeting. Remind them how what they've learned will keep them safe and healthy.
- Plan a positive ending for the meeting. Send participants off with some encouraging words as an incentive to really put what they've learned to work on the job. If you've

scheduled the next safety meeting in an ongoing program, remind them of the time, place, and topic.

Conducting an Informal Meeting

An informal safety meeting is more like a casual "oh, by the way" discussion than the formal type of presentation just covered. It may last only 5 or 10 minutes and may involve fewer people. It is less likely to include outside experts, audiovisuals, and handouts.

The informal meeting is often used to introduce a relatively simple new procedure or substance or to correct problems you've spotted on the job.

But just because the meeting is brief and informal doesn't mean it doesn't need preparation. You don't need a detailed agenda, but you should make notes or prepare a checklist to make sure you cover everything important.

Once you've explained the procedure or problem, demonstrate how to do it correctly. Ask for and encourage questions and discussion, and, if appropriate, provide opportunities for hands-on practice.

LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

The roles and characteristics of a leader are the same on a ball field, a battlefield, the executive suite, or the factory floor. A leader makes people feel they're all in it together, that they can really make a difference if they work together toward common goals.

You can be the top person on the totem pole without being a leader. A leader is someone others look up to and want to follow. A leader shows respect for his or her team and creates a stimulating, exciting environment in which each individual feels that his or her efforts are important to the team's performance, achievements, and level of excellence.

Don't confuse leadership with power or with giving orders. A leader is someone others want to follow. To be a leader:

- **Create a team.** Use words like "we" and "our" whenever possible. Look for opportunities to build a team spirit: Credit the group for a lower accident rate or get several members to work together to help you plan a safety meeting and assemble and demonstrate the "props."
- **Involve employees in goal-setting.** Consult with them, for instance, on topics they think should be covered in safety meetings.

- **Give employees responsibility-and accountability.** Show them you trust them to do the job right once they have the tools and knowledge; hold them accountable for any lapses.
- **Emphasize the importance of competence and quality.** Praise what's done well.
- **Treat failure as a learning experience** (as long as it doesn't put anyone at risk). Safety meetings are an ideal opportunity for learning and experimentation in a "safe" environment-learning to properly inspect protective clothing, practice proper lifting of awkward loads, etc.
- **Give credit to others for their ideas;** for example, "This safety meeting topic was Joe's suggestion"; or "We have a lot easier access to the MSDSs since Jan arranged them in a more logical order."
- **Show respect for workers' intelligence and perception.** Explain that their safety knowledge and safe performance do more than reduce health or fire risks or avoid OSHA fines. Making safety part of each job also improves productivity and profitability, protects the air and water in the neighborhood, etc.
- **Be fair.** Don't play favorites and don't take out your own moods or personal problems on workers.
- **Minimize conflict.** You want your department to be a team, not warring gangs. Don't try to improve performance by comparing workers or creating rivalry. Emphasize your common goals and how much more can be accomplished by working together.
- **Be a buffer** between other departments and management layers, not an instigator. Don't use the "big bosses" as a threat or blame them for a policy workers don't like.
- **Set an example.** The fact is, you are an example whether you intend to be or not. So make sure you do what you say and do what's right-consciously, positively, and consistently.
- **Accept that you're not just "one of the guys."** That doesn't mean you're better or more important, and it doesn't mean you're not human. But if you want workers to look up to you and respond to you as a leader, you have to make sure you don't say or do things that would lose their respect.

Motivation

One tool that leaders/supervisors use to promote safety-and any kind of desirable on-the-job behavior-is motivation. In its simplest form, motivation is the old "carrot and stick." Reward what's good and punish what's bad.

There are a variety of ways to motivate workers to take safety meetings and their safety responsibilities seriously-including the communication and leadership techniques already discussed in this chapter. When you get the safety message across-the what and the why-and you create a team that can work together to set and meet safety goals, you're most of the way home.

Most supervisors, however, find that it's hard to keep safety motivation at a high level.

Attention wanders during safety meetings. There are so many safety "dos and dont's" that people lose track. The other demands of workers' jobs may push safety concerns aside.

To keep workers' safety motivation high, you have to first keep your own safety motivation on a hot front burner. If you think, "Oh no, it's time for another safety meeting," your attitude will filter down to workers and they'll approach the meetings the same way. If your presentation style is dull and disinterested, as if you just want to get the meeting over with, workers won't learn much and they won't put much priority on safety.

Safety meetings alone, of course, aren't enough to create a safe workplace. They're most effective if they're supported by other motivational tools and techniques that help keep safety awareness front and center all day, every day.

Employee safety committees are one possibility. If your department has a lot of varied safety responsibilities, you might create a worker safety committee to oversee several of them. The committee could, for instance, conduct monthly inspections of the work area to check for frayed wires, missing machine guards, etc. (Note: Be sure, however, that other workers don't stop paying attention to these items because they believe "it's the committee's job.")

The committee could poll workers on desired safety meeting topics, help supervise protective clothing inspections, take turns working with new employees to raise their safety awareness, etc. Your committee can be formal, with regular meetings, agendas, or minutes, or more ad hoc-convening when it's time to do what they're supposed to do.

Safety posters and booklets can reinforce your safety meetings and overall safety emphasis. There are a number of sources of colorful, clever materials bearing safety slogans and illustrations and even procedures for doing certain jobs safely.

Select a special bulletin board spot for a safety poster-a lunchroom or locker room location that everyone passes is a good choice. Keep unrelated materials off that part of the bulletin board and change posters regularly so people will really notice them.

Talk to your safety director about obtaining illustrated safety booklets. Booklets are available on virtually every safety topic and are a good way to get people to stop and think about that aspect of safety-plus being a handy reference on the job.



The factors that motivate workers to work safely are the same factors that motivate people to do anything. As indicated earlier in the discussion of praise and constructive criticism, people repeat behavior that's rewarded and avoid behavior that's punished. They also tend to forget about behavior that produces neither reaction.

So the first principle of motivation is to take nothing for granted. Don't assume, because recent safety meetings have gone well, that you can put off the next one. Don't assume, because your whole department is performing a given task safely, that workers will continue to do so-without motivation.

There's a bit of psychology involved here. People need to feel a sense of personal challenge, achievement, and control on the job. They need to know what goal they're reaching for, why it's important, that they have the tools and knowledge to do it, and that someone will notice and reward them for achieving it.

Rewarding Safety Achievements

Most people think "reward" means money, or something money can buy. But that's just one type of reward. A reward is anything the individual wants to receive. It can, for instance, be private or public praise, a positive memo in the personnel file, or some special privilege, as well as monetary rewards.

You can't just hand out cash for safety achievements, but you can come up with rewards for individuals (even better, for the group) to show that you notice their safety achievements and think they're important. Here are some proven motivational techniques and rewards.

- **Praise.** You can't compliment someone often enough-as long as the praise is sincere and reflects specific good performance. "You're doing a great job" doesn't mean a great deal: Much better is, "Your thoroughness and efficiency in handling lockout/tagout procedures has reduced our accident rate while keeping our maintenance right on schedule. Thanks."
- **Example.** Encourage someone who has mastered a particular technique to share his or her expertise. Ask that person to do demonstrations during safety meetings or to help workers who are new or struggling with the task. Ask for advice on how to improve instruction so other workers will perform as well as this person. Appoint good safety performers to a plant safety committee.
- **Challenge.** Some workers want constant challenges and opportunities to learn and grow. You might reward them with a chance to take courses, go to a trade show, learn a new job, etc.
- **Suggestion systems.** A suggestion system encourages workers to develop ideas that reduce hazards or improve safety on the job. This works best if it is a

companywide program with clear directions on the type of suggestions sought, special suggestion forms, and a committee appointed by top management to review and select suggestions for implementation.

An effective suggestion program should acknowledge each suggestion and respond quickly so that workers know their ideas are really getting attention. When a suggestion is rejected, workers should be told why. When a suggestion is accepted, the worker should receive recognition. Some companies award a small percentage of the money the suggestion saves the company. For safety ideas, savings are usually calculated on the basis of elimination or reduction of accidents and injuries. Most companies with suggestion systems set a cap on the amount of money an employee can receive for a "winning" suggestion.

- **Prizes.** Conduct departmental safety contests, with prizes. You could, for instance, have a drawing of all those who have gone a month without an accident; give the winner a T-shirt or a free meal at a local restaurant.

You might give a similar prize to employees who haven't missed a safety meeting in a year, whose safety suggestion is making the workplace safer, or who reported a hazard that prevented an accident or spill.

Group prizes can be effective, too. Reward a team achievement with caps, T-shirts, etc., imprinted with the company logo or safety slogan-something that visibly links the achievement with the award.

- **Safety contests.** Your company or department may want to participate in one or more of the many safety contests sponsored by the National Safety Council, local safety councils, and industry trade associations. Most such contests are based on accident statistics over a period of six months, a year, etc. The sponsoring organizations may have posters and other materials that you can use to help spur interest.

You could also work with other supervisors in your company to create interdepartmental safety contests. This is a great way to build team spirit within departments while raising safety performance throughout your company. You could, for instance, base an interdepartmental contest on the greatest percentage decrease in accidents over a particular period. The winning department would get companywide recognition, with each member receiving a prize like a certificate or a T-shirt.

- **Recognition.** Spread the word on important safety achievements such as an idea that eliminated a hazard or an exceptional period without an accident. Write a memo and post it on bulletin boards. Submit the information to the company newsletter. Announce it at a departmental or plant meeting.

- **Celebration.** Recognize group achievements with coffee and doughnuts at a break or an after-work picnic to show workers you recognize and appreciate what they've done.

KEEPING SAFETY MEETING RECORDS

It's important to keep records of all safety meetings for your reference, for your company's management, and for OSHA and other regulatory agencies that may want to inspect your company's compliance with training requirements.

Keep track of the date and topic of each meeting, as well as who attended. This is particularly important when your meeting deals with an area where training is explicitly required by law, such as the Hazard Communication Standard. In fact, written Hazard Communication Standard programs-or lack thereof-has consistently generated the largest number of OSHA violations in recent years.

You don't need elaborate training records, but you do need something on paper. The easiest way to do this is to have a sign-up sheet at each safety meeting, with your name, the date, and the topic at the top. Have each employee sign that he or she has attended the session, including any employee ID numbers. See the Forms Section for an example.

You might also want to keep a separate training record on each individual you supervise. Put your name and the employee's name and job title at the top of the sheet, along with an employee ID number if it exists.

Then divide the sheet into two columns, one for the name of the training session and one for the date the employee attended the session. You may want to leave space for comments and notes at the bottom of the sheet. See the blank sample in the Forms Section.

The individual training records can also be valuable to you when you're trying to identify training needs for your group or for individual members.

When you consult with your manager and with your safety professionals on setting up your program schedule, find out if they want any reports on your safety meetings. If so, get specific information from them on exactly what they want in a report, whether they want one on each meeting or on the overall schedule, etc.



If such reports have been requested, be sure to submit them promptly while the experience is still fresh in your mind. Many companies use the results of safety meetings as a key part of their safety planning and training program.

HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR SAFETY MEETINGS

No person or program is going to be perfect the first time out. It's important to evaluate your safety meetings regularly to determine what worked best and what could be improved. This can be done in several ways.

- **Self-evaluation.** After each meeting, review it objectively. Were you well-organized? Was the group attentive? Did they ask questions and participate? How did they respond to the audiovisual components? Was the meeting the right length? Too long? Too short? Was the meeting room a good choice for the purpose?
- **On-the-job evaluation.** Equally important, evaluate the results back on the job. Are workers using the methods and procedures covered in the meeting? Is there an improvement in safety, a reduction in accidents?
- **Participant evaluation.** You may want to provide participants with anonymous questionnaires on each meeting or on the overall program. Ask what they liked and didn't like about the content, presentation, length, etc. Ask if they feel they mastered the subject, if it was applicable to them on the job, etc. (See sample in the Forms Section)
- **Tests.** A test is the best way to find out if the safety meeting did the job of transferring the information. (Whether it gets used is another question.) You might consider giving short written tests at the end of a session if you think your group will accept and can handle that approach. Or you might do more informal "tests" on the job several weeks after the meeting. Ask a worker to perform a procedure that you covered or to describe the key information on a label, etc.
- **Cost evaluation.** Put costs in a positive light. Instead of just identifying the costs of putting on the meeting, compare those costs with the costs of not having such meetings. Safety meetings can lead to demonstrable savings in such areas as workers' compensation, insurance, and lost time due to accidents, productivity, etc. Such documentation will make all parties feel better about the program.

Use all these evaluations, as well as feedback from any other supervisors, safety professionals, or managers who attended the meeting, to help you improve future safety sessions.

Take any employee criticisms seriously, but don't overdo it. The most important result is not whether participants enjoyed the safety meeting but whether the meeting improved actual on-the-job safety. It's certainly desirable to get people interested and involved, but

what's most critical is to get the message across.

Once you've considered all the evaluations, decide if you want to modify the agenda of future meetings to emphasize the approaches-demonstrations, audiovisuals, etc.-that seemed to be most effective. You may also want to adjust the length of programs. If, for instance, comments suggest meetings are too long, break the next topic into two shorter segments. Finally, change your schedule to include-or remove-topics as needs emerge and change.

PUTTING IT ALL TO WORK

Now that you know why safety meetings are so important and have guidelines to follow when you plan and conduct them, you're ready to proceed with a safety meeting program that works.

HOW TO USE THE SAFETY MEETINGS OUTLINES

Safety meeting outlines are provided on a wide range of topics. Some of the topics are specific, like Welding and Cutting, while others are more general in nature, such as Good Housekeeping. Some are more like templates, for which you have to supply the technical information-like How to Introduce a New Procedure. When the topic doesn't exactly match your needs, use the outline as a starting place to custom-design your own meeting outline.

TURNING AN OUTLINE INTO A MEETING

Turning an outline into a meeting will depend on which approach you choose. For a comprehensive meeting or a tool-box talk, you could read the material just as it is and find yourself presenting an acceptable safety meeting. However, your presentations will be much more effective if you use this information as a guideline, inserting details about your operations and tying the topic directly to what your people do each day.

For a PowerPoint presentation, we suggest you customize the slides and slide show notes to meet your facility's needs. Delete any slides that do not apply to your operations. You may also add your own illustrations, if desired.

The seven- minute sessions are designed to highlight or reinforce safety knowledge or procedures. The heart of the seven-minute session is list of their numbered points. Take a minute or so to read over the session quickly before presenting it. Mark any points you want to especially emphasize, based on your group's particular hazards, procedures, or observed safety problems. If the session includes points that don't apply to your group, you may either mention them briefly or skip over them to allow more time for your



specific issues. The sessions are set up so that you can read them word for word. If desired, you may also use the points as an outline and rephrase them in your own words. You may also wish to enhance the sessions with real-life examples. At the end of each session you'll find discussion points to allow employee participation.

Tool-box talks are meant to be read as is.

Hands-on presentations provide suggestions for interactive activities and discussions to get your employees involved in their safety training.

HOW LONG A MEETING?

How long will the meeting be if you follow the outlines? Well, it depends on the meeting approach you choose. If you were to simply read the material presented in a comprehensive meeting, it would take from 10 to 20 minutes depending on the topic. If you add a few minutes for getting started, and 10 minutes for discussion at the end, you're going to take 25 to 35 minutes. If you sprinkle stories, examples, and discussion questions throughout, add 10 to 20 more minutes. If you have a demonstration, you'll add even more time.

A PowerPoint presentation could take about 30 minutes to an hour, depending on how much discussion you allow as you present the material.

A tool-box talk is meant to be brief and should take only a few minutes. Seven-minute presentations are self-explanatory. A hands-on meeting depends on the amount of interactive exercises and discussion you plan.

Once you have a few meetings under your belt, you'll be able to predict about how long each part of the meeting will last.

All meetings have associated handouts to reinforce what your employees have learned. Most meetings also have associated quizzes to test your employees' knowledge. Some handouts and quizzes are also in Spanish.

BREAK THE MEETING IN TWO?

If you have only a short time available for a meeting, or if you have so much detailed information to provide that it won't fit in one meeting, split the topic into two. For instance, take first aid. You might get a refresher course into 30 minutes. If you want to go in-depth, and have your people practice treating "casualties," break the subject up into natural parts-in this case, you might choose bleeding for one meeting, breathing for



another, and heart attacks and other problems for a third meeting. Or, you might decide that CPR training is important for all your people, and you might have to schedule a number of sessions to get that extensive training accomplished.