



BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

Making the Most of Tool Box Talks

Tool box talks, when properly planned and delivered, have proven to be an effective way to communicate about the importance of safety on construction sites. When they are delivered on a regular basis they can increase safety awareness and help to prevent accidents and incidents.

While planning for safety on a construction project does take time, the return on investment is well worth it. Tool box talks are an important part of the planning, training and communication process. Remember that when we talk about communication we are including verbal communication as well as non-verbal communication. The non-verbals (actions, body posture when delivering the tool box talks, actions in the field after the talk) are generally more powerful in the long run than the verbals. Owners, managers, and supervisors must “walk the talk”.

As a contractor, you want to accomplish the following on your job sites:

- complete projects on time and on budget (or under budget)
- provide the best level of quality to project owners
- provide a safe work environment for employees and other contractors who are on site
- minimize scheduling delays and damage that can be caused when accidents occur
- make a profit

What do your employees and others working on your projects expect when on a job site?

- To go home each night to their families in the same condition as when they arrived in the morning
- To earn a decent wage
- To be notified about job hazards that they might face
- To be trained so that they can perform their job safely and correctly
- To work for a contractor who visibly demonstrates that they care about the health and safety of their employees

There are many similarities between owners and employees when it comes to health and safety. Accidents, near misses, and other incidents only slow down production, increase costs and can impact the project, the contractor or other contractors, other employees and the family of the employees involved.

Many contractors have found that it is best to schedule tool box talks at the same time each week. As a minimum tool box talks should be held once a week. You may find that you need to have additional meetings with certain trades just before the start of a particular job operation.

Some suggestions for making tool box talks more effective:

- Limit the length of talks. In general, tool box talks shouldn't take more than a half hour.
- The adult learner is a very visual learner. Holding tool box talks near or in the work area allows you to show examples of what you are talking about.
- Start the meeting on a positive note. If you are enthusiastic the audience will more likely be interested in what you are saying.
- Keep the talk informal. Don't read the prepared tool box talk verbatim. Use it as a reference but put the talk in your own words.
- Involve the audience. Ask questions. Ask them to tell about their own personal experiences.
- Use positive recognition whenever you can to point out examples of people who are practicing what you are talking about.
- Use humor. While safety is serious, use of humor can help get across a serious message.
- Use props. If you are talking about ladder safety have an actual job site ladder to talk about how to inspect it, set it up, use it, etc. Visual images last longer in the memory than the spoken word.
- Review the upcoming work schedule and the potential safety hazards of the various jobs that will be occurring.
- Talk about recent injuries, near misses or safety violations noticed on walk around inspections. Ask for input on why the accidents, unsafe conditions, and/or behaviors observed exist and what suggestions workers have to improve them.
- If questions are raised that you can't answer, don't be afraid to say you don't know - but do say that you will try and find out the answer. Then do so and get back to the person raising the question. At the next talk share the answer that you found with the rest of the crew.
- Thank them for their attendance, attention and participation. Show that you aren't just giving tool box talks because someone told you to.

Follow Up:

- Remember that a tool box talk should be a learning experience. The outcome of successful learning is the application of that knowledge in real world situations. This application is demonstrated by people's behaviors.
- If you gave a talk on PPE, follow up after the talk to make sure that workers are using PPE properly. If they aren't, ask why, correct the situation, and follow up again later.
- When you see a worker following the safety procedures that were discussed in one of your tool box talks, take the time to thank them. In your thanks, specifically point out what they were doing that was correct. Don't just say “Thanks for working safely.” Say “Thanks for taking that baseball cap out from under your hard hat. I appreciate it!”



Monthly Toolbox Talk

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Hard Hats

ANSI-approved hard hats are designed to protect you from the impact of falling objects, and with some types, from accidental contact with electrical current. However, the way we take care of our hard hats can have a big impact (no pun intended) on how well it does its job.

A few dos and don'ts regarding the use and care of your hard hat:

- DO CLEAN your hard hat as needed, using a mild soap and water solution or other solution recommended by the manufacturer.
- DO STORE your hard hat as recommended by the manufacturer, which means keeping it out of the direct sun (like on the back dash of your car) and out of areas with high heat (like in the car trunk) while you're off the job.
- DO INSPECT your hard hat shell and suspension for damage and deterioration every day before use, as well as after any event that may affect its integrity (such as being struck by a falling object or crushed).
- DO REPLACE your hard hat shell or suspension when it shows any signs of damage or deterioration.
- DO NOT PAINT your hard hat. Hard hat manufacturers typically forbid using paints because they can degrade the strength of the hard hat shell, making it easier to break.
- DO NOT USE SOLVENTS to clean your hard hat. Just like with paints, solvents can also degrade the strength of the hard hat shell.
- DO NOT ALTER OR MODIFY your hard hat. Drilling holes and/or inserting screws in your hard hat so you can add attachments (or for any other reason) can weaken the shell of your hard hat, and can also allow electrical current to pass through.
- DO NOT WEAR YOUR HARD HAT BACKWARDS unless specifically approved by the hard hat manufacturer and your employer.
- DO NOT WEAR A BALL CAP OR TOBOGGAN BENEATH YOUR HARD HAT. Doing so could interfere with the suspension and shell, which work together to reduce the force of an impact. Cold weather liners approved by the hard hat manufacturer are available.

Obviously, your hard hat won't protect you unless it's being worn. But to give you the maximum protection offered, they must also be worn in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations for the particular brand and model in use, as well as in accordance with the policy of your employer. So please take care of your hard hat, so it can take care of you.

Safety Reminder

- See Something?
- Say Something, and
- Fix It

Employee Recommendations:

HOW THIS TOPIC APPLIES TO THIS JOB:

ATTENDEES: Print Name / Signature (use back if necessary)

DATE: _____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

JOBSITE / PROJECT:

