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## Safety Training is More Important Than I Thought!

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Many years ago, I was sitting in a college class and an individual made a comment that has stuck with me all these many years. That quote was, "We shall not cease being trainees until we retire."

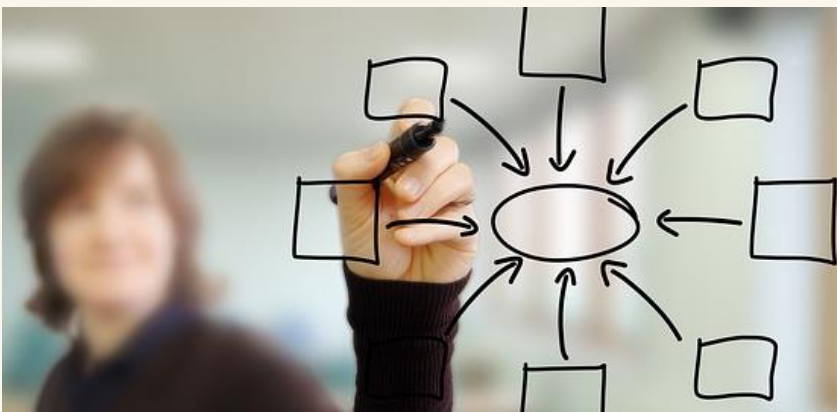
So the question begs, how well do we do with initial and on-going safety training? Can all employees explain every existing and potential hazard to which they are exposed? Do they know how to protect themselves and their coworkers from these hazards? Can they explain precisely what they must do in the event of a fire or other emergency?

Training can help employees develop the knowledge and skills they need to understand workplace hazards. OSHA considers safety and health training vital to every workplace.

Before training begins, be sure that your organization's policy clearly states the organization's commitment to health and safety and to the training program. This commitment must include paid work time for training and training in the language that the worker understands.

New employees need to be trained not only to do the job, but also to recognize, understand and avoid potential hazards to themselves and others in their immediate work area and elsewhere in the workplace. Contract workers also need training to recognize your workplace's hazards or potential hazards. Experienced workers will need training if new equipment is installed or process changes. New training also may be necessary when OSHA or industry standards require it or new standards are issued.

One-on-one training is possibly the most effective training method. The supervisor periodically spends some time watching an individual employee work. Then the supervisor meets with the employee to discuss safe work practices, bestow credit for safe work and provide additional instruction to counteract any observed unsafe practices. One-on-one training is most effective when applied to all employees under supervision and not just those with whom there appears to be a problem. Positive feedback given for safe work practices is a very powerful tool. It helps workers establish new safe behavior patterns and recognizes and thereby reinforces the desired behavior.



Evaluations can help determine whether the training you have provided has achieved its goal of improving your employees' safety performance. Some ways you can evaluate your training program:

- Before training begins, determine what areas need improvement by observing workers and soliciting their opinions. When training ends, test for improvement. Ask employees to explain their jobs' hazards, protective measures and new skills and knowledge.
- Keep track of employee attendance at training.
- At the end of training, ask participants to rate the course and the trainer.
- Compare pre-and post-training injury and accident rates, near misses and percent of safe behavior exhibited.

OSHA recommends refresher training be provided as needed to reinforce initial training and to address new developments in the workplace. Nursing Assistants and Other Workers at Risk of Injury should be trained before they lift or reposition residents or perform other work that may involve risk of injury. Ergonomics training can be included with other safety and health training or incorporated into general instructions provided to employees. Training is usually most effective when it includes case studies or demonstrations based on the nursing homes policies and allows enough time to answer any questions that may arise. Training should ensure that these workers understand:

- Policies and procedures that should be followed to avoid injury, including proper work practices and use of equipment;
- How to recognize MSDs and their early indications;
- The advantages of addressing early indications of MSDs before serious injury has developed; and
- The nursing home's procedures for reporting work-related injuries and illnesses as required by OSHA's injury and illness recording and reporting regulation (29 CFR 1904).

In one study, 130 participants took part in a research study to determine the retention rate of safety knowledge among professionals in a 12 month period. The average score among participants immediately after the safety training was calculated at 92.17%. Knowledge continued to drop to 64.75% after 6 months. And after 12 months, participants had forgotten more than half of what they had learned in training.

In short, the purpose of safety training is to ensure employees are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to manage risk and hazards as well as prevent accidents.

Sources:

OSHA - Occupational Safety and Health Administration RTI International

### **Editor's Note:**

*The KING Safety Matters newsletter is published monthly to provide general safety information. It is not a substitute for adequate safety training, or intended to provide complete safety information or training, on any specific subject. The information contained herein is intended to assist safety efforts, and increase safety awareness.*

*In order to ensure the contents of the newsletter are helpful and important to you, please feel free to send comments, suggestions and feedback to:*

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