

Do Your Workers Need a Safety ‘Pep Talk’?

How do you know if it's time for a pep talk? Look for signs that employees are getting lax about safety. For example:

- An increase in accidents and near misses
- Dirty, disorganized, or dangerous work areas
- Workers not wearing required PPE
- Employees taking shortcuts, skipping steps, and not following safety rules
- Workers not using tools and equipment properly
- People apparently unaware of safety hazards or requirements—or simply not caring
- Workers rushing through their work, not looking out for co-workers, or fooling around
- Employees missing safety meetings or skipping safety training sessions
- Workers failing to report workplace hazards, accidents, or near misses

Should you target individuals or talk to everybody? The answer depends on what you see when you take a good, hard look around the workplace. If it's just a few people taking risks or ignoring safety requirements, then certainly start by targeting those workers. Sit them down individually or as a group and give them a good pep talk. With hardcore safety shirkers you may have to do more than talk, of course. Those few who think the rules don't apply to them may need discipline to turn them around. But sometimes just reminding workers who've gotten careless about the possible consequences of their actions might be enough to change both their attitude and behavior.

If a lot of employees are getting sloppy and careless, then talk to everybody. Talking up safety can never hurt. Even the safe workers need encouragement to keep focused on safety. A good pep talk might just prevent someone who is generally a safe worker from engaging in risk taking at some time in the future.

What can you say that could make your workplace safer? There's a lot you can say to boost employee safety awareness and encourage safe work behavior. For example, in addition to talking about safety issues specific to your workplace, you could emphasize fundamental safety do's and don'ts like these in your pep talks:

DO:

- Treat safety as an important job responsibility.
- Think ahead all day, every day, no matter what you're doing.
- Plan each job before you start.
- Think about what could go wrong and how you'll prevent problems and accidents.
- Use labels, MSDSs, and other safety information so that you'll know how to work safely.
- Inspect tools and equipment before you use them.
- Keep the safety rules in mind while you work.
- Pay attention to what you're doing and avoid distractions.
- Know what to do in an emergency.
- Take safety training seriously.
- Ask questions when you're unsure of what to do or how to do it.

DON'T:

- Ignore any safety hazard—remove it, repair it, or report it.
 - Turn a blind eye to co-workers' unsafe actions—talk to them about the risks and the precautions.
 - Bypass safety procedures—or let others talk you into doing so.
 - Neglect to use required PPE.
 - Work on very hazardous jobs, such as tasks in confined spaces, without a buddy.
 - Rush, take shortcuts, or skip steps.
 - Fool around.
 - Ignore good housekeeping requirements in your work area.
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Why It Matters...

- *There are more than 4 million recorded workplace incidents involving employee injuries and illnesses every year.*
- *More than 5,000 workers die in work-related accidents annually.*
- *You can make a difference and help protect your employees by speaking up and speaking out about safety.*
- *The more your workers know about potential hazards and necessary protections, the safer they'll be on the job.*

This is an information fact sheet highlighting safety alerts, hazards or recent worker injuries that are occurring in your industry. This information is made available to you by PLANET's Safety and Risk Management Committee. If you have any questions or concerns, please call (800) 395-2522.