

Safety

SOLUTIONS



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Communicating Safety to Your Spanish-speaking Employees

What are some of the barriers to effectively communicating safety to your Spanish-speaking employees? Even more important, what can you do to overcome them? At Greenscape, Inc. in Holly Springs, North Carolina, Safety Officer Leslie Herndon, CLT, cites these barriers to effectively training Spanish-speaking employees:

- gender (a female training all or predominantly all male crew members)
- habits (Spanish-speaking workers from other countries may not have developed any safety habits)
- differences in medical care (including hesitancy to see a doctor if injured)
- language
- “machismo” (dominant role of the male in many Spanish-speaking cultures)
- age (older workers being trained by a younger trainer)
- education (low literacy levels due to little formal education)

Here are some of the effective tools Greenscape uses that you can also use to overcome these barriers:

- Graphic illustrations of injuries and accidents (visit www.cdc.gov/niosh.face for examples)
- Being direct, and giving “real life” examples.
- Ensuring that important documents are available in Spanish.
- Hiring qualified Spanish translators.
- Speaking Spanish when you can (even if your Spanish-speaking ability is limited).
- Using your insurance company to request training assistance.
- Implementing “Safety Bingo” (a safety incentive game that many green industry employers have found to be very effective).

“Use a lot of ‘visuals’ in your safety training,” Herndon emphasizes.

Guidelines for Effective Safety Committee Members (Part 2)

Editor's note: In our May 2007 issue of Safety SOLUTIONS, we gave you some tips from Erin Maurer, a manager at Lied's in Sussex, Wisconsin, on what makes an effective safety committee. Here are the rest of her suggestions that can be passed onto your own company safety committee members.

HOW YOU CAN BE A GOOD SAFETY COMMITTEE MEMBER:

DO:

- Promote health and safety by personal example.
- Help make your own crew an outstanding example of accident prevention.
- Always use personal protective equipment where required.
- Keep your supervisor and coworkers informed of any safety problems.
- Develop good listening skills.
- Consider other viewpoints and opinions.
- Contact other members of the safety committee if you do not understand a situation or need technical assistance.

DO NOT:

- Let yourself be used to obtain or repair equipment, or develop or adapt policies that are not needed or are not directly related to workplace safety. Take all issues to the committee.

DO NOT:

- Violate established safety rules.
- Have a negative attitude about an unsafe condition or behavior. DO work with supervisors and other staff to correct the problem in a timely manner.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO BECOME A BETTER COMMITTEE MEMBER?

- Be aware of all of the machinery, materials, and equipment used by your crew and the applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and department of transportation standards.
- Know what special hazards are associated with the chemicals and other materials used by your crew.
- Know our company's accident reporting procedures. Know where first-aid equipment is located and who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Know what types of accidents and injuries are most common at our company and what can be done to prevent them. Also, know what types of personal protective equipment and other safety devices should be used to protect employees from injury.
- Know what new processes and equipment are being planned which may affect the health and safety of employees.

Checklist for Identifying the Hazards of Confined Spaces

Editor’s note: More and more PLANET members are learning from OSHA that they have confined spaces on their operations. Some examples of confined spaces at landscape companies are hydroseeders and spray tanks. If you do have confined spaces, it is important to become familiar with OSHA’s Permit-Required Confined Spaces Standard. One good Web-based resource is: www.osha.gov/SLTC/index.html. (Then search for “Confined Spaces” in the Topics Pages Index.) This checklist is designed to assist you in keeping your employees safe around any confined spaces you identify.

- We have identified all of the confined spaces on our operation.
- These are (list):

- We have posted “DANGER: Confined Space – Enter by Permit Only” signs on or next to all of our confined spaces. These warning signs are posted in a language or languages our employees understand.
- We have trained our employees in the dangers of confined spaces, and have verbally warned them to STAY OUT unless they have been specifically authorized to enter, have received the proper training, and have the appropriate protective equipment.

- Employees who regularly work around confined spaces have been trained in their specific hazards (including physical hazards, extreme temperatures, and/or potentially toxic gases or vapors).
- We have contacted our local fire department or emergency rescue service to find out whether personnel have been trained in confined space rescue.
- We have invited our local fire chief or emergency medical services representative to our operation to see where our confined spaces are located.
- We have a written confined spaces policy that includes the names of any employees authorized to enter confined spaces. Our policy also includes information on the equipment we have available (including air monitoring and ventilation equipment, and such protective equipment as body harnesses with lifelines and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) respirators).
- Our employees are aware that multiple deaths often occur in confined spaces when a would-be rescuer who has not been properly trained attempts to rescue a coworker.
- We are familiar with the requirements of OSHA’s Permit-Required Confined Spaces Standard.
- We have a system in place for warning contractors and visitors of the hazards of any confined spaces on our operation.

Green Industry Employers' Workplace Violence Checklist

Editor's note: Workplace violence continues to be a growing concern throughout the country. Although some incidents of violence cannot be prevented, there are steps you can take to reduce the risk. This checklist is aimed at assisting you in having a safe workplace for employees, customers, and other visitors.

- Thoroughly review your hiring practices. Workplace violence is often precipitated by employees with a history of fights or other violence in the past. Make sure that you carefully pre-screen job candidates, and that you check references. A good question to ask a job candidate's former supervisor is: "Is this person eligible to be re-hired?" If the answer is "no," think very carefully about hiring that potential "problem" employee.
- Implement a drug/alcohol screening program, and test job applicants for the presence of drugs or alcohol in their systems. Know that many acts of workplace violence are perpetrated by drug or alcohol abusers.
- Develop a "zero tolerance" policy that prohibits violence of any kind. Put your policy in writing, and clearly explain it to all employees. Include in your definition of "violence" fights, threats, physical or sexual harassment, and the intentional destruction of property.
- Take all reports of violence or threats of violence seriously. Know that even joking about violent behavior can be a precursor to actual violence. Encourage employees to report any unwelcome conduct or unusual behaviors.
- Know that domestic abuse often spills over into the workplace. If an employee reports threatening phone calls, stalking, or similar behavior from an ex-spouse, boyfriend, or other person, take those reports seriously. Do not have the attitude that it is not your concern because it is a "private" matter.
- Train your supervisors and other employees in the signs of potential workplace violence and how to respond.
- Strictly prohibit employees from bringing guns or any other weapons onto your property or onto job sites. Also, prohibit weapons from being carried in company vehicles.
- Review all security measures to make sure they are adequate. Seek help from local law enforcement officials if you need it.
- Prohibit retaliation against any employee who reports concerns about potential workplace violence.
- Have a written crisis management plan in place, and periodically review it with all employees.

Professional Landcare Network
950 Herndon Parkway, Suite 450
Herndon, VA 20170
(800) 395-2522 Fax: (703) 736-9668
LandcareNetwork.org

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