



TOOLBOX TALK: Commitment to Safety

BY: Mike Richardson, AmFed

November 2016

The primary objective of this safety tool box talk is to emphasize critical areas necessary for safety to become a true commitment in the workplace.

Safety can be incorporated into our everyday duties in the workplace each and every day. This takes a true commitment by giving the time and effort needed to insure your safety on the job as well as that of your fellow workers. This may include following all safe procedures, wearing the correct protective equipment and being involved in your company's safety program on a consistent basis. Every employee should be committed to working safely and proactively participating in the development and implementation of a safe culture within your organization.

Let's identify what a safe workplace is. A safe workplace is one where all employees are a part of the process in continually reducing the risks associated with the work that is performed in your facility. The goal of zero injuries or illness is a real one.

Now, we must all understand what commitment to safety really means. The word commitment is defined as "to pledge or promise". This pledge or promise related to safety is not only a commitment to yourself but to all your co-workers as well. Your commitment means you will seek to perform your work in a safe manner that will be an example for all others to follow at all times. That is quite a pledge! Also, the ending to that statement, "at all times" puts everyone on notice that there is no letting up in your commitment. This all sounds good, right? But how can we begin to implement this commitment to safety? One way is to learn and follow the top ten safety commitments.

The top ten safety commitments, if followed, will elevate your safety performance and help to keep you and your co-worker's injury free. Let's list these top ten:

1. Follow all safety policies and procedures.
2. Know your company's emergency procedures.
3. Handle all hazardous material according to the instructions.
4. Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment.
5. Report all safety hazards or issues.
6. Operate all equipment correctly.
7. Avoid taking safety risks.
8. Learn and put your safety training into practice.

9. Report all accidents.
10. Contribute to your work area safety

(Take a few minutes and talk on each point below.)

Following all safety policies and procedures may be the most important. This commitment includes adhering to important policies regarding, fall protection, scaffolding, trenching, equipment operations, hazard communications, personal protective equipment, electrical hazards, etc. These have been put in place to protect you and your co-workers.

Emergencies are unexpected events that if not handled promptly and correctly could lead to disastrous consequences. It is critical to know your company's emergency procedures in detail. Immediate and clear communication of an emergency to the correct responders is critical to everyone's safety.

When working with hazardous materials be sure that you understand all aspects of the specific chemical. Always read your labels and refer to the Safety Data Sheet (SDS).

Wear the proper personal protective equipment, known as PPE. Specific PPE is needed for each job task that you may perform. Be sure you know which PPE to wear, how to use it properly and understand how it protects you from the hazards of your work tasks. You also need to know how to maintain and clean the PPE to insure it is kept in good condition.

Whenever you see a safety hazard you should report it immediately. If you are trained and can do it safely, you may correct or remove the hazard. It is your duty as a safe employee to not ignore a safety issue.

Our next commitment is very important as well and is the proper use of equipment. Whether it is a small hand tool or a complex industrial equipment, you must operate the equipment according to the instructions. Also, know who to contact to repair equipment you are using. Do not repair equipment yourself unless you are trained and have permission. The risk is too large to take a chance on improper repair of critical equipment.

This leads to our next item. Avoid taking safety risks. Taking shortcuts is inviting trouble. An easy example is attempting to lift a heavy object that you should get assistance to move. You may end up injuring yourself, or in the process of carrying the load, drop the object and injure someone else.

A couple of related issues are housekeeping and horseplay. Keep your area clean; pick up debris, and other trip hazards. It is a well-known fact an organized and clean workplace can positively impact safety. Also, never engage in horseplay. The workplace is no place for foolishness, which may lead to injury.

Be sure to report accidents promptly and be a cooperative participant in the investigation. Good investigations lead to improvement. Also, have you ever almost been close to being injured but by sheer luck avoided the accident? This is a "near miss" and it should be reported as well so that it will not happen in the future.

Take training seriously. Pay attention and learn the details of all your safety training. The training will prepare you for situations that may arise. Commitment to safety is a win/win for all!!