



Environmental Management Consulting, Inc.

Building a Safety Foundation – Start Simple

In the construction industry, building communication is just as important as building structures. Just like a building without a strong foundation, a company safety policy without communication will most likely fail. An effective safety program requires frequent communication with your staff as well as regular oversight to ensure compliance with internal programs.

A very effective tool in communicating with your field staff is a concept called “Tool Box Talks”. These brief safety overviews can cover a wide variety of general safety topics. They can include simple items like good housekeeping practices or detail out more complex concepts like reinforcing fall protection standards or confined space entry requirements. To be effective, Tool Box Talks (TBT’s) should be distributed to all staff on a regular and consistent basis. Distribution by the on-site supervisor helps strengthen the safety foundation. TBT’s are a very visible tool to enforce management’s commitment to safety and reinforce staff expectations. And more importantly, they come from someone who also gets their hands dirty every day.

If you just starting to enhance your safety program start with simple, common sense ideas that are easy to implement. Educating staff that safety policies are really just good common sense will go a long way in getting participants to buy into your program.

A simple and straightforward example is stressing good housekeeping as a way to prevent injury.

Some people think that good housekeeping is a waste of time. But if you spend just a few minutes picking up, you might keep someone from slipping or tripping. You could prevent an injury that keeps them off work for weeks or even months. Five minutes to save months off work— it’s a good investment. And next time, it could be **you** who gets hurt.

Housekeeping is everyone’s job—every trade, every worker, and every supervisor. And it’s a job you should do every day—not just once a week or when a project is over. The first rule is to do your work neatly in the first place, and then clean up after yourself. Good housekeeping does more than prevent injuries—it can save you time, and it can keep your tools from being lost, damaged, or destroyed.

What can you do to prevent slips, trips, and falls?

- If you see a mess, take care of it. Don’t wait for someone else to clean it up. Pick up anything you see lying around, especially if it could trip someone or fall.
- If you find someone’s tools or equipment around, move them out of the way. Put them somewhere safe, but visible.
- Immediately clear scrap and debris from walkways, passageways, stairs, scaffolds, and around floor openings.

Securing Safer Futures...

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- Make sure the ground is level and well-graded within six feet of buildings.
- Keep storage areas and walkways free of holes and obstructions.
- Clean up spills of grease, oil, or other liquids at once. If it's not possible, cover them with sand or some other absorbent material until they can be cleaned up.
- Coil up extension cords, lines, welding leads, hoses, etc. when not in use.
- Make sure there's adequate lighting. If a light is out, report it. Replace it immediately if you can.
- Watch the weather closely and monitor both interior and exterior walkways.
- Keep exit paths free from obstruction.

Remember, our actions can have a significant impact on others. A clean and orderly workplace shows you take pride in your work and makes everyone's work environment more pleasant.

Equally as important as Tool Box Talks, is regular oversight by management to ensure employee compliance with your safety policies. On-The-Job inspections by the site supervisor will help build the safety culture. This supervision must also come at regular intervals to be effective.

The foundation must be strong for a program to thrive.