Talk About Safety



What's at Stake

Whether you call it safety coaching or a preshift meeting, you may need to talk to your co-workers about safety and why safety is a cooperative effort.

What's the Danger

Lives could depend on everyone working safely, so you need to share information on how to avoid injuries and you need to keep people aware of their safety habits. It takes courage to tell fellow workers they are doing something unsafe or even to "talk up" safety, but you might prevent a serious incident.

Example

Chris found it difficult to discuss safety with a co-worker who used unsafe work practices and stated, "This is the way we've always done it." Chris eventually realized his co-worker was uncomfortable with new ideas and preferred the same old routine, so Chris pointed out that old work habits are not always the safest way. "Years ago, you didn't see workers wearing personal protective equipment. But we now know certain chemicals are dangerous, so we use proper respiratory equipment. Now that we have better information, our work habits are safer."

How to Protect Yourself

- If you have difficulty talking about safety with an individual, avoid aggressive confrontations in front of others. Start a quiet one-on-one conversation and keep your comments cheerful and productive. When you see a safe action, congratulate the person.

- If your co-worker persists in unsafe actions, talk over the problem with an appropriate person. Maybe your coworker's work buddy can find a better way to change the person's unsafe habits. Communicate your concerns to your supervisor. Don't ignore unsafe behavior.

- When starting a task that will affect the work of other people, first tell them what you are assigned to do. Let them know if it includes a lockout and tagout of operating machinery, and about how long the job will take.

Ask if the timing is okay for their work.

- When there are hazards, put up warning signs and install barricades.

- Most importantly, speak up when you notice a co-worker doing something dangerous such as removing a guard on operating machinery. Don’t let your coworker enter a confined space without the proper authorization and equipment. Don’t just shake your head and turn away when someone breaks your company’s safety rules. Speak up now!

Final Word

You can make a difference to the overall safety of your workplace. Give positive feedback to your co-workers, watch out for their safety as well as your own, and don’t be afraid to speak up if you see a safety infraction.