

# Tips for Enhancing Your Crew Talks



## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

All companies are required to have a formal or informal Occupational Health and Safety Program as set out in British Columbia and Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Legislation. Informal or formal Occupational Health and Safety Programs are developed based on the level of risk in the workplace and the number of workers exposed to medium to high levels of hazards.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER?

When it comes to the construction and field service industries, concerns that tend to loom in the back of every project manager's mind are a potential employee injury, structural disaster, or some other catastrophe happening on their job site. While many mistakes, missteps, and equipment malfunctions are unavoidable, there are steps you can take on top of following the minimal safety requirements to protect your crew from danger.

One simple yet effective way to do this is by holding regular "toolbox talks" before starting a project.

### 4 Good Reason Why Toolbox Talks Work

#### 1. Create A Culture Of Safety At Your Company.

Company culture is important to all parts of your business. It lets your employees know what core values you hold in high esteem, along with what's not acceptable at your company. By hosting toolbox talks, you'll reinforce to your employees how important safety is at your company, increasing the chances your workers think twice before making a potentially dangerous decision that might put them or their fellow crew members in jeopardy.

#### 2. Create Camaraderie In Your Crews.

Not only do toolbox talks equip workers with the safety knowledge they need to execute a job, they can also help create an overall sense of camaraderie between you, your crew members, and the company as a whole. By getting your workers involved in either leading a toolbox talk or simply asking for their input, they may feel more appreciated, resulting in boosted team morale and job site productivity.

#### 3. Leave Nothing To Chance.

Every construction or field service project is different, and comes with its own unique challenges as a result. By leading a toolbox talk before your crew gets started on these jobs, you'll be able to give them first hand advice specific to that job as opposed to generic safety tips which might not apply or be useful for certain projects. Toolbox talks will help get every worker on the same page when it comes to safety, project after project.

#### **4. Show Workers You Care.**

On a final note, having toolbox talks on a regular basis also shows you care about the well-being of your employees enough to take this extra step to keep them safe. Toolbox Talks is one way to increase employee loyalty to the company.

It never hurts to take extra precautionary steps toward becoming a safer organization. By hosting toolbox talks regularly, you'll create a company culture focused on safety, and a more productive workforce ready to tackle whatever projects come their way.

## **HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF**

Taking initiative on health and safety items has a positive impact on your workplace health and safety culture. Ensuring that crew safety talks are being done effectively and efficiently plays a role in a positive health and safety culture. Crew talks are used as a training tool for workers regarding job specific safe work practices and procedures, communication of workplace incidents and injuries, health and safety hazards, controls and processes in your workplace. Building a positive safety culture where workers feel comfortable to speak up and bring their issues or ideas forward takes time. Below are 4 helpful tips to enhance your crew talks and tips to build a positive safety culture.

### **Be an Industry Leader**

Ensure you are confident in the information you are delivering. Review the material before your meeting and ensure that the material you are delivering is relevant to the crew that is attending. Use specific examples from your workplace that pertain to the topic of discussion to bring relevance to your crew. Create your own safety talks rather than using already made talks off the internet to ensure it is industry specific.

### **Talk Directly to Your Audience**

If you are speaking about a general safety topic, add industry or job specific information to make it directly relatable to your crew and their work. Throw in personalized information about certain people, different crews. It is vital to always ask for crew input and ideas during a safety talk. Keeping your crew interested and invested in the information you are providing helps in ensuring they are carrying the information over to their job daily.

### **Keep it Brief and to the Point**

Hit all necessary information that is relevant, do not add fluff and unnecessary facts or comments. Workers will lose their focus if you are relaying information that is irrelevant and does not pertain to them. Create a handout with bullet points, pictures, visual information they can also follow along on when you are delivering your meeting.

## Stay Positive!

Safety talks are your chance to create a positive culture around safety. Crew safety talks are an opportunity to proactively encourage safe behaviour and improve workplace safety before an incident takes place. Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe work environment, learning from mistakes that have happened in the past.

## The Presentation

**Begin With The Unexpected:** A funny story, a quotation, an interesting statistic.

Be **Enthusiastic** about your subject.

Use (appropriate) **Humor** in every presentation.

Use **Stories** and concrete examples that are relevant to your audience to illustrate your points.

Use **Dramatic** techniques – pauses – looking at the group – walking to different parts of the room to vary the dramatic energy.

Use **Visual Aids** effectively.

“3 X 3” is a good rule for powerpoint presentations: 3 words, 3 lines per slide (you can go to a maximum of 6X6) The same holds true if you’re still using overhead projectors!

Always **Check** that your audience can see, and avoid speaking while writing on the board or flipchart.

When distributing hand-outs, **Wait** until you have everyone’s attention before speaking.

Establish and maintain **Eye Contact** with your audience. Remember to give each and every participant – or part of the room – your attention.

**Eliminate** distracting items – on your person, in your pockets, in your hands (avoid holding pens, clanging change, etc).

## Use Effective Body Language:

- Anchor yourself solidly on your feet
- Take up space with your body
- Allow arms to relax by your sides; avoid
- “Closed” postures – upper arms glued to sides of body, crossed arms
- Show non-threatening hand movements – open palms or the steeple gesture when appropriate
- Tilt head when listening to responses; keep your head straight to indicate authority
- Move purposefully towards the audience to show interest in their responses
- Make sure there is congruence between what you are saying with words and with your body

## FINAL WORD

Toolbox talks are a great safety training tool that, if delivered properly, can be an ideal way to provide timely safety reminders to employees, improve safety awareness

and contribute to an improved safety culture.