Safety Spotlight

The Benefits of Making Safety Training a Priority[1]

In the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)'s 2018 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, the total number of fatal injuries increased 2%, up to 5,250 from 5,147 in 2017. Even though the number of fatalities increased, the total number of workers also increased, resulting in a steady annual fatal injury rate.

Maintaining a consistent rate highlights the importance of safety training. With nearly 2.5 million more employees from 2017 to 2018, you might expect a drastic increase in occupational deaths. In actuality, the number only rose by 103.

When safety training, and continued safe practices, are implemented, you can be sure your employees are aware of the correct steps to take to create a safe working environment and happy employees.

Meeting and Maintaining OSHA Compliance

Since its creation in April 1971, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has been charged with ensuring "safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance."

The impacts of safety training since OSHA's creation are undeniable: the number of worker injuries and illnesses dropped from 10.9 per 100 workers in 1972 to 2.8 per 100 workers in 2017, while the average daily worker deaths fell 63% during that same time.

With very few exceptions, all employers in the United States fall within OSHA's jurisdiction, either through Federal OSHA or an OSHA State Plan. Therefore, OSHA standards are often the first place companies look when exploring how, and over what topics, they should train their employees. When determining which standards your company needs to enforce, you should think about the potential hazards faced by your employees rather than simply looking at your industry regulations. For instance, if you run a construction company, some employees may need training in bloodborne pathogens (BBP) in order to safely and fully administer first aid at job sites. However, you will not find a bloodborne pathogens regulation in the Construction section; BBP falls under General Industry.

Taking Control of Safety

Occupational health and safety (OHS) experts have started focusing on educating employees and identifying potential issues rather than on what is essentially damage control.

> " *When safety training, and continued safe practices, are implemented,* you can be sure your employees are aware of the correct steps to take to create a safe working environment and happy employees.[1] "

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[1] *Benefits of Making Safety Training a Priority [Web log post]. (2020, June 2). Retrieved from https://safetyskills.com/benefits-making-safety-training-priority/*

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By taking a prevention-based approach and trying to stop an accident from happening, companies may be able to save the time and money that comes along with mitigating the effects of workplace accidents.

A job hazard analysis (JHA), sometimes called a job safety analysis, task hazard analysis or job hazard breakdown, is one way for your company to identify and work to correct potential dangers in your specific workplace. Conducting a JHA will help you understand the most dangerous jobs in your workplace, what those specific hazards entail, and corrective and preventive measures you can take to reduce or completely eliminate the likelihood of accidents, injuries, and illnesses.

Safety Starts at the Top
In order for workplace safety to be truly effective, education and implementation need to start at the top. Employees are more likely to follow all the proper procedures if management and those in safety positions lead by example. Steps you can take to create a safe working environment include:

- **Educate all workers.**
  - » While you need to be aware of workplace-specific hazards and procedures, there are many general safety topics employees should be trained on. For example, in 2018, slips, trips and falls accounted for nearly 20% of all workplace fatalities and more than 1 in 4 non-fatal injuries. Completing a fall safety course can help employees identify fall hazards and ways to minimize or eliminate those hazards.
- **Ensure workers use the proper safety equipment.**
  - » No matter what kind of hazard may be present on a job site, there is some form of personal protective equipment (PPE) that can help protect affected workers, from hard hats and gloves to protective boots and full-body covers.
  - » Under OSHA requirements, in almost every instance, it is the employer's responsibility to pay for necessary PPE items. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure all PPE is in safe working condition and that each employee is properly trained on using the equipment.
- **Empower your employees.**
  - » Even when employers do all they can to set up their workplaces for safety success, it is truly up to the employees to make sure safe habits are being carried out. With employees involved in the day-to-day operations, they are much more likely to be the first to see potential issues.
  - » One way to empower employees is to implement a Stop Work Authority (SWA). Such a policy makes it possible for a competent, trained employee to identify a situation that is unsafe/where there is imminent danger and gives them power and obligation to stop the work before an incident happens.

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> » Employees should also be encouraged to conduct regular safety checks of their own areas to ensure standards are being met by every worker. By putting this power into the hands of the employees rather than only people in management, you will foster a culture of safety from the ground up.

- **Don't forget the basics.**
  - » When you think about worker safety, you probably consider some of the typical job hazards, such as dangerous equipment or hazardous materials. However, it is important to also consider ergonomics, which aims to increase productivity and reduce discomfort.
  - » Effective workplace planning along with well-designed equipment can help minimize or eliminate potential risks and reduce worker injury. OSHA offers guidance on many different ergonomic topics such as repetitive motions or excessive heavy lifting.

Training Today's Employees

As the generation raised on technology now makes up more than 35% of the American workforce, it makes sense that training techniques have changed. Perhaps one of the most significant changes regarding training this new workforce is having mobile-optimized content. After all, 93% of Millennials and 90% of Gen Xers now own a smartphone.

The pervasiveness of always-connected mobile devices means learning should be available at all times and accessible from anywhere. Additionally, the content must not only be accessible on a mobile device but it must function just as well as it would on a desktop computer. Think about when you visit a website on your computer versus on your phone. The look, feel and overall usability need to match in order to provide the best experience.

Because we have become a mobile-first society and have developed an affinity for short interactions, such as those common on Snapchat or Instagram, it is necessary for training to be fully engaging from beginning to end. Users are far more likely to stay actively present in a training video lasting 5-15 minutes than in a full lecture that could last from 30 minutes to well over an hour.

Microlearning, the common name for these short learning modules, suits the reality of today's learners very well. You can find them as short as three minutes, meaning they get directly to the point without any unnecessary "filler" content that may distract from the key information.

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