Everyone’s a Safety Inspector

What’s at Stake?

Regular inspections are an effective way to monitor conditions and procedures to ensure that company standards, as well as regulatory requirements, are being followed.

Unless your workplace is perfect, the result of an inspection will be an inventory of problems, potential problems and corrective measures.

What’s the Danger?

If you aren’t actively and regularly looking for safety hazards, they can lurk out of sight and out of mind until something serious happens. The best way to find these hidden hazards is to assign as many people as possible to look for them. That’s why safety inspections are part of your job – no matter what job you do.

How to Protect Yourself

All inspections should be carefully documented, and the inspection program should include managers, supervisors, safety committee members, employees, contractors and subcontractors.

General site inspections should include all field and office locations, maintenance shops, work camps and company leisure areas such as lounges and cafeterias. Inspection schedules should be based on potential hazards at the sites and the severity of risks posed by the work.

For example, weekly inspections might be justified for a gas processing facility, while monthly would be adequate for a warehouse or shop.

Site inspections should include:

1. Physical layout and conditions of the site, including terrain, season and weather.
2. Identification of hazardous materials being used and handled and the condition of equipment and tools.
3. Work practices and the behavior of people at the site as well as the level and quality of supervision.

Examples of hazards to look for:

- Slipping and tripping hazards. Blocked exits; and faulty or missing emergency equipment.
- Improper or missing signs.
- Faulty machinery, cables and securing devices; as well as faulty electrical equipment and connections.
- Confined spaces. Difficult terrain that makes vehicle or worker movement dangerous.
- Flammable, corrosive or explosive materials, dangerous gases, hazardous chemicals; and missing safety data sheets.

You and your co-workers should be observed and questioned to ensure you understand and are following standard work procedures and using the tools and equipment properly.

Someone should also be checking to make sure you are using personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety gear correctly.

You should also be regularly drilled in emergency response procedures.

Final Word

When everyone is a safety inspector and when everyone is on the lookout for dangers, hazards have nowhere to hide.