One Safeguard Doesn’t Make it Safe Meeting Kit

One Safeguard Doesn’t Make it Safe (Safety Talk)

Many different things could go wrong during a work task or throughout a day that can result in injury to employees. Because of this fact it is important to realize that achieving a safe workplace is combination of many different efforts and not just any single action or safeguard.

SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

Safeguarding measures protect workers against contact with hazardous moving parts or other harmful conditions when working around machinery and equipment. **Safeguards include barrier guards, safety devices, shields, awareness barriers, and warning signs.** These methods can be used on their own or in combination to protect workers from hazards.

IMPLEMENT SAFEGUARDS: A safeguard could be something as simple as installing a physical barrier to keep people away from a specific danger. For example, if a part of a machine tends to get very hot while in operation, it may be appropriate to add a cage around the hot areas so people can’t get to close and get burned. This will also ensure nobody puts flammable items in the area, not realizing that it will get hot once the machine is used.

Simple Solutions – Not The Answer: Many different things can go wrong during the workday that can result in injury to employees. Often when a safety hazard is identified, it is thought of as a single issue. It may fall into the category of a slip/trip/fall, electrical, machine guarding, or in one of the many of the other hazard categories. A lot of time and money is spent to keep the workplace incident-free and employees healthy. When looking for solutions to workplace hazards, we often try to find the simplest solution. However, safety solutions should be thought of as a combination of many actions.

One Solution Mindset: Some individuals have the mindset that **one solution** will resolve the hazard. They may think that wearing PPE or installing a guard will resolve the issue. Having the mindset that a simple solution will resolve a problem is in and of itself hazardous. Our roadways are safer when we follow multiple rules; if people only followed the speed limit and ignored traffic lights, the rate of accidents and injuries would certainly go up. It is no different with safety. There are likely several safeguards that need to be put in place in order to assure a hazard is abated.

OVERVIEW

Having a **"good enough"** mindset will leave employees at risk when hazards are not thoroughly abated. Assessing a safety hazard requires that it be looked at from multiple angles. The hierarchy of controls (eliminate, substitute, engineering controls, administrative controls, and PPE) should be considered and looked at from a variety of angles or options. There may be several engineering controls that can be used, or more than one type of PPE required. We also need to consider who will it affect? Can other people not involved in the work process be harmed? In other words, we need to look at the big picture and not think that a safety hazard is resolved by simple solutions.

SAFEGUARD TAKEAWAYS FOR WORKERS

There are multiple safeguards for any single hazard in the case that one safeguard fails.

Look at a scenario involving work on a scaffold.

- Eliminate as many objects, tools, and equipment as possible from the scaffold work platform.
- Make sure proper toe boards and guardrails are installed around the work platform.
- Tie off tools or use a container to place tools in while working on the scaffolding.
- Eliminate foot traffic below the work area.
- Place signs or barricades to prevent people from walking

below the scaffolding into the line of fire of a dropped object.
- Place proper netting or roof above the area below to catch any objects that fall from the work area above.
- If an individual only uses one or two of the mentioned safeguards to mitigate the hazard of dropped objects, then there is more of a chance that objects could be dropped and strike a person below.

FINAL WORD

Look at what you are currently doing to mitigate the hazards of your work tasks. Are you only implementing one safeguard for a complex or serious hazard? What other actions can you take to lessen the risk of injury for you?