Recognized Versus Unrecognized Hazards Meeting Kit

There are many hazards in our workplaces that can cause great harm if exposed to them. While it is often thought that new employees of a company who may not understand the hazards of the job are most at risk for injury, a case can also be made for those experienced employees who have become complacent with the hazards of their work. A question to consider: Which are more dangerous- the hazards we recognize or the ones we do not?

DANGERS OF UNRECOGNIZED HAZARDS

It is a common occurrence that when someone has been working the same job for many years, they get complacent. That isn't always on purpose, it can happen without you even realizing it. For the safety of everyone working, it is vital that you stay aware of the hazards that can occur. No matter how long an employee has been on the job, all hazards should be addressed.

DANGERS OF BEING COMPLACENT WITH RECOGNIZED HAZARDS

Once you have attended safety training over and over again, it becomes less effective on you. Long time employees become comfortable with the risks that their job possesses.

Injuries and fatalities are two of the main hazards that can happen. When you are working in these hazardous conditions without repercussions, it begins to not affect you in the same way. In a time crunch, corners may be cut. It just takes one time for that hazardous condition to not work out.

THREE STEPS TO HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

1. Process Identification: In order to identify hazards, you

first have to take a close look at all of the processes at your place of work. Examples of processes include:

- cleaning
- maintenance
- office work
- painting
- welding
- lift truck operation
- production facilities
- packaging
- security

2. Task Identification: The second step is to list every task performed for each process. For example, here are some of the tasks that are typically carried out by maintenance personnel:

- electrical installations and repair
- mechanical repairs and preventative maintenance
- groundskeeping & snow removal
- building maintenance
- H.V.A.C.
- upkeep

3. Recognize Hazards within the Task:

The third step is to recognize the hazards of each task.

These hazards include the following:

- People
- Equipment
- Material
- Environment
- Processes

CONTROLLING HAZARDS

Once hazards are identified and assessed the next step is to determine the effectiveness of existing controls and identify necessary improvements.

There are basic classifications of hazard controls:

1. Engineering controls could include:

- elimination
- isolation
- substitution
- automation
- machine guarding & re-design

2. Administrative controls could include:

- standard operating procedures
- training & education
- inspections & investigations
- work practice
- job rotation
- progressive discipline
- competent supervision

3. Personal protective equipment could include:

- hard hat & work boots
- gloves, sleeve protectors, aprons, & coveralls
- respirators or surgical masks
- hearing protection
- safety glasses, chemical goggles, & splash shields
- insulated or breathable
- workwear

FINAL WORD

It is necessary to be able to recognize the hazards of your work; from there you can take action to protect yourself and your coworkers around you. It is also important to realize that being able to identify hazards does not mean you are now able to take shortcuts during your work. Some experienced workers may feel that since they understand the hazard and have worked around it for a long time that they do not have be as cautious or take all the necessary steps to work safely around that particular hazard.

Complacency towards recognized hazards can be as or more dangerous than the hazards you do not recognize.