Safety is a Common Language Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Many companies find that the more abstract safety and environmental hazards are some of the hardest to convey to LEP workers. Technical jargon also may not translate well, and workers with a low level of education may have difficulty understanding more complex or technical topics, even with proper translation.
2. Employees who experience very few hazards in their direct job duties will need at least some training over emergency procedures and how to respond to fires, spills, and other incidents in their work areas.
3. It’s imperative that all employees know how to identify hazardous areas, equipment, and chemicals in the workplace, even if they don’t work with them directly, and that they understand the reporting procedures if they witness a safety incident.
4. All employees need to understand their rights and responsibilities on the job. Speaking the language of ‘common sense’ on site causes accidents because everyone is then led to believe that vital knowledge to be safe is known by everyone.
5. Language issues are problems with communication via speech, signs, gestures, or their written equivalents. They may result from poor reading and writing skills, a mix of foreign languages and other circumstances. Language issues are not picked up as a safety risk on the shop floor by current safety management systems.

STATS

- Nearly half of all foreign-born workers are LEP. 29% of immigrant workers who have been in the country for 20 years

or more still can be classified as LEP. Many have a low degree of formal schooling and have higher degrees of difficulty with technical language than conversational.

- Over the last five years, Hispanic and Latino workers have seen the highest increasing rate of workplace fatalities of any ethic group, rising from 16% of all workplace fatalities to more than 22% of all such deaths in 2020.
- The United States is a melting pot of different cultures. The latest U.S. Census shows more than 21% of U.S. households speak a language other than English, with nearly 1 in 7 Americans speaking Spanish. Only Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and Spain have more Spanish speakers.
- Additional Census data reported that roughly 68 million people – more than 8% of the population – speak English "less than very well" regardless of what language is primarily spoken in their homes.
- According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration under the United States Department of Labor, language barriers contribute to 25% of job-related accidents.