Workplace Inspection

WHAT’S AT STAKE?

Workplace inspections help prevent accidents, injuries and illness. Workplace inspections are a basic necessity of any safety program. A critical examination of the workplace will identify and record hazards for corrective action. Safe to say, workplace inspections serve the purpose of identifying hazards in the workplace.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

Objects, equipment, people and even animals find their way into work areas – Hazards

Types of workplace Hazards

- Safety hazards such as those caused by inadequate machine guards, unsafe workplace conditions, unsafe work practices.
- Biological hazards caused by organisms such as viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites.
- Chemical hazards caused by a solid, liquid, vapour, gas, dust, fume or mist.
- Ergonomic hazards caused by physiological and psychological demands on the worker, such as repetitive and forceful movements, awkward postures arising from improper work methods, and improperly designed workstations, tools, and equipment.
- Physical hazards caused by noise, vibration, energy, weather, heat, cold, electricity, radiation and pressure.
- Psychosocial hazards that can affect mental health or well-being such as overwork, stress, bullying, or violence.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Planning is essential for effective inspection

- Every inspection must examine who, what, where, when and how. Pay particular attention to items that are or are most likely to develop into unsafe or unhealthy conditions because of stress, wear, impact, vibration, heat, corrosion, chemical reaction or misuse. Include areas where no work is done regularly, such as parking lots, rest areas, office, storage areas and locker rooms.
- Look at all workplace elements – the people, the environment, the equipment and the process. The environment includes such hazards as noise, vibration, lighting, temperature, and ventilation. Equipment includes materials, tools and apparatus for producing a product or a service. The process involves how the worker interacts with the other elements in a series of tasks or operations.

Three types of inspection reports

Ongoing

Pre-operation

Periodic

Supervisors and workers continually conduct ongoing inspections as part of their job responsibilities. Such inspections identify hazardous conditions and either correct them immediately or report them for corrective action. The frequency of these inspections varies with the amount and conditions of equipment use. Daily checks by users assure that the equipment meets minimum acceptable safety requirements.

Pre-operation checks involve inspections of new or modified equipment or processes. Often these are done after workplace shutdowns.

Periodic inspections are regular, planned inspections of the critical components of equipment or systems that have a high potential for causing serious injury or illness. The inspections are often part of preventive maintenance procedures or hazard control programs. Laws and regulations may specify that qualified or competent persons must inspect certain types of equipment, such

as elevators, boilers, pressure vessels, scaffolding, and fire extinguishers at determined points in the work process and at regular intervals.

FINAL WORD

There can be a variety of issues in any single work area. It is important to take the time to thoroughly check your work area for hazards and take the steps to mitigate them. Eliminate as many hazards as you can before relying on a less efficient control to protect yourself such as PPE.