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Toolbox Talk – Recognizing Unsafe Conditions

Date _____ **Company Name** _____
Supervisor _____ **Job Name** _____

In order to exercise proper safety procedures within a worksite, employees first need to understand how to recognize unsafe conditions. In fact, it is impossible to build a truly safe environment unless every employee understands how to identify the hazards around them. Without these basic tools, any other safety programs and practices will not be fully effective. For instance, an employee may understand how to put on his respirator, but this knowledge is useless unless he knows how to look for the signs of a gas leak.

Also, it is important to understand that workplace hazards are everyone’s problem:

- It is common for employees to recognize a problem and ignore it, simply because they assume that their manager, foreman, or evaluator will take care of it.
- It is common for an employee to feel like something is wrong, but dismiss this by thinking, “Well, what do I know? No one else seems to care, so it must be fine.”
- It is common for an employee to feel a hint of danger/notice a risk, but assume that he can “just push through and finish the job.”

All of these responses are dangerous, and they contribute to more onsite accidents and injuries. Safety is everyone’s job, and each individual is responsible for recognizing, communicating, and correcting the unsafe conditions around him.

Guide for Discussion

When you are at work, you should begin every new task by first checking your surroundings for hazards. This small step can save you and your fellow employees so much time, stress, and pain. Remember, it takes far less energy to prevent an accident than it does to recuperate after an accident.

Here are some common causes of unsafe conditions:

- Insufficient communication.
- Goofing around.
- Disorganized material storage.
- Careless or untrained handling of materials, machinery, and/or equipment.
- Improper, defective, or outdated tools.
- Lack of guarding or warning signs around hazardous areas.
- Insufficient or improper use of personal protection equipment.
- Hazardous weather (wind, rain, lightning, tornadoes, etc.).
- Improper clothing (i.e., failure to wear proper work boots).
- Failure to follow instructions (either deliberately or through poor attention to detail).
- Insufficient training (new hires attempting to perform advanced tasks, etc.)

Steps to take once an unsafe condition is found:

- If possible, communicate the hazard to any nearby employees and correct the condition yourself.
- If it isn’t possible to correct the condition yourself (such as defective machinery or extreme weather), report the condition to your manager, foreman, or evaluator. Depending on the rules of your company, you may need to report to a higher authority. (Specify the method of reporting unsafe conditions within your company here.)
- If the condition has not been corrected within the expected time frame, follow up with your superior.

Safety Recommendations: _____

Job Specific Topics: _____

Attendees

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