Syracuse Builders Exchange

BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

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KEEP FINES FROM SKYROCKETING WHEN OSHA SHOWS UP

What's the difference between a $2,100 and a $21,000 OSHA citation?

Often, it could come down to how quickly you correct the hazard.

Case in point: OSHA visited a construction site operated by MVM Contracting Corp. The inspector saw excavation work being done without cave-in protection and told the site superintendent about the hazard.

Four days later, the inspector came back, and workers still didn't have cave -in protection.

OSHA slapped the company with a willful violation—and a $21,000 fine.

The company appealed the fine and originally had it reduced to a serious violation and a $2,100 price tag.

But the Occupational Safety ad Health Review Commission (OSHRC) reversed that decision, returning it to a willful violation with the larger fine.

Why? Because the inspector told the superintendent about the cave-in hazard, and no one did anything to correct it.

Correct hazards right away.

MVM could have paid a fraction of the fine it ended up with and avoided a lengthy appeals process. The lesson for companies is clear: If an inspector comes knocking, correct any hazards immediately.

And if you can't correct the hazard right away, block workers' access to the area until you can make the fix.

Ifno: Secretary of Labor v. MVM Contracting Corp., OSHRC, No. 071350

Source: Safety Compliance Alert, 8/24/2010

5 WAYS TO IMPROVE SAFETY TRAINING AND PREVENT THE NEXT INJURY.

Do workers let info go in one ear and out the other?
Does safety training seem like high school to workers? Do they sit in a room and listen to a lecture?

That's OK for kids, but adults learn differently. They retain 20% of what they read, 30% of what they hear, 40% of what they see, 50% of what they say, 60% of what they do, and 90% of what they see, hear, say and do.

Here are 5 ways to engage workers in safety training so they remember 90% of it and stand a better chance of not getting injured or worse.

1. Group projects with 1 response
The trainer breaks the class into groups of three or four workers.

Workers receive a description of a situation and two or three questions that are to be answered by the group.

One person in each group presents the answers to the class.

Working in groups allows workers to get up and move around and discuss their ideas with each other. This emulates real life in which members of a team gather to resolve a problem.

2. Employee demonstrations
Most employees know something about the training before it begins.

The trainer can ask workers what they know about the topic. If it involves something like properly putting on PPE, the trainer can allow a worker to demonstrate what they already know. If there are any errors, the trainer then makes corrections.

By establishing what the workers already know, this method can save time.

3. Peer coaching
A peer of a worker watches another employee work and then makes recommendations for improvement. This takes training out of the classroom and puts it in the real work world.

Better: Bring in an outsider who can point out employees' shortcomings without harming a working relationship.

4. Story Telling
Making a message more personal helps people remember it.

If you know someone who has been injured at work, ask that person to give a presentation to your workers. You can videotape the session to present it in future years.

5. Student-centered learning
Ask workers what they hope and expect to learn during training. Write their responses on white board or pad.

As the training covers these areas, make a point of noting that and check off the items on the list. This helps workers feel they've had a part in focusing the training.

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MONTHLY TOOLBOX TALK

CONCRETE & FORMWORK

Concrete is the most widely used building material in the world. It's used in slabs, footings, driveways, sidewalks, walls, piers, caissons, and even roofs. Concrete is used to build such things as roads, buildings, bridges, homes, and septic tanks. There is a number of hazards associated with its use so make safety a priority when you work with concrete. Anyone working with concrete or involved in concrete placement should be aware of the hazards and safety precautions related to this building material. Construction workers are exposed to concrete on a daily basis and should know how to work with it safely. Let's focus on some of the problems and dangers to be dealt with when pouring concrete.

A cubic yard of concrete weighs approximately two tons! Considering the weights and loads involved, formwork failure is a very real possibility. Formwork must be designed, fabricated, erected, supported, braced and maintained so that it will be capable of supporting all vertical and lateral loads that might be applied to it. The supporting structures must also be able to handle the load. Additional information can be found in OSHA standard 29 CFR 1926.703 and in sections 6 and 7 of ANSI A10.9-1983: Construction and Demolition Operations - Concrete and Masonry.

All reinforcing steel for walls, piers, columns and similar structures must be adequately supported to prevent overturning and collapse. Any protruding reinforcing steel, onto or into which you could fall, must be guarded to eliminate the hazard of impalement. Prevent unrolled wire mesh from recoiling by securing each end or turning the roll over.

Concrete contains hazardous materials that can cause severe skin and eye injuries. Contact with wet concrete can result in skin irritation ranging from a mild rash to severe skin ulcers and chemical burns. If you get concrete or cement in your eyes during mixing or pouring, you may suffer redness, chemical burns, and blindness. To protect your eyes and skin, wear personal protective equipment including waterproof gloves and boots, a long-sleeved shirt, full-length trousers, and eye protection. If your job requires that you stand in wet concrete, make sure your waterproof boots are tight at the top and high enough to keep concrete out. If you are a concrete finisher who has to kneel on fresh concrete, use a dry board or waterproof kneepads to protect your knees.

If your skin comes in contact with wet concrete, wash the area immediately with lots of cool, clean water. Flush your eyes in cold running water for at least 15 minutes if they become contaminated with cement dust or wet concrete. Then, seek immediate medical attention. After you work with concrete, and before you eat, drink, or use the toilet, wash your hands and face. Never wash your hands with water from buckets used for cleaning tools.

Concrete is a very heavy material. Mixing and moving concrete can be a backbreaking job. A wheelbarrow filled with concrete is extremely heavy. Take precautions to prevent back and shoulder injuries as well as muscle strains. Use proper lifting techniques and do some stretching exercises before you begin your work. Form failure is a significant hazard especially when large or tall forms are in use. Always make sure that formwork is properly braced and supported.

During cutting and chipping operations, you can be struck by flying particles. Head, face, and eye protection are necessary to guard against injury from those flying particles.

Hearing protection is required when workers are cutting or grinding concrete, sandblasting, or when they are exposed to noise levels greater than 85 decibels. There is no remedy for hearing loss, so you must take the necessary precautions to prevent it. Remember that workers involved in sandblasting concrete must also wear respirators.

The equipment used to handle concrete can also create hazards. Full concrete trucks are very heavy. Not only can they sink and get stuck, but the weight of the truck can cause excavation walls to collapse. When working as the signal person directing the driver of a cement mixer to back up, always keep eye contact with him. Pay attention to a cement truck's back-up alarm and get out of its way. Make sure that the chutes are pinned or locked in place. Keep your arms, hands and fingers away from pinch points when attaching and repositioning the chutes. If you're using concrete buckets on the job, never stand underneath one, especially when it's being raised or lowered. Under no circumstances can you ride in or on a concrete bucket.

Before each job, review the task at hand and be sure you have all required PPE.