

Workers' Comp & Safety News



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Safety

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How to Conduct a Job Hazard Analysis

A job hazard analysis can help you identify hazards that can lead to injury.

A hazard is the potential for harm. In practical terms, a hazard often is associated with a condition or activity that, if left uncontrolled, can result in an injury or illness.

A job hazard analysis is an exercise in detective work. When conducting a job hazard analysis, you try to discover the following:

- ✦ What can go wrong?
- ✦ What are the consequences?
- ✦ How could it arise?
- ✦ What are other contributing factors?
- ✦ How likely is it that the hazard will occur?



This Just In

Although texting while driving, drunk driving and distracted driving get a lot of attention, speeding remains the biggest risk factor in auto accidents. And motor vehicle collisions lead the causes of work-related fatalities and injuries.

The National Safety Council (NSC) says that the cost of a single accident could easily exceed \$1.4 million. Direct costs can include medical costs, liability costs and workers' compensation payments. Accidents can also have indirect costs, such as lost productivity and increased personnel costs.

Training can help reduce your employees' risk of being

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You can conduct a job hazard analysis on any job. To get the most out of your efforts, though, consider the following types of jobs first:

- ✱ Jobs with the highest injury or illness rates,
- ✱ Jobs with the potential to cause severe or disabling injuries or illness, even if there is no history of previous accidents,
- ✱ Jobs in which one simple human error could lead to a severe accident or injury,
- ✱ Jobs that are new to your operation or have undergone changes in processes and procedures, and
- ✱ Jobs complex enough to require written instructions.

Where do I begin?

- 1 Involve your employees.** Your employees have a unique understanding of the job, and this knowledge will help them identify hazards. Involving employees will help minimize oversights, ensure a quality analysis, and get workers to “buy in” to the solutions because they will share ownership in their safety and health program.
- 2 Review your accident history.** Review with your employees your worksite’s history of accidents and occupational illnesses that needed treatment, losses that required repair or replacement, and any “near misses”—events in which an accident or loss did not occur, but

could have. These events are indicators that the existing hazard controls (if any) may not be adequate and deserve more scrutiny.

- 3 Conduct a preliminary job review.** Discuss with your employees the hazards they know exist in their current work and surroundings. Brainstorm with them for ideas to eliminate or control those hazards.

If any hazards exist that pose an immediate danger to an employee’s life or health, take immediate action to protect workers. Do not wait to complete your job hazard analysis. This will demonstrate your commitment to safety and health. For hazards that present unacceptable risks, evaluate types of hazard controls.

- 4 List, rank and set priorities for hazardous jobs.** List jobs with hazards that present unacceptable risks, based on those most likely to occur and with the most severe consequences. These jobs should be your first priority for analysis.
- 5 Outline the steps or tasks.** Nearly every job can be broken down into job tasks or steps. When beginning a job hazard analysis, watch the employee perform the job and list each step as the worker takes it. Be sure to record enough information to describe each job action without getting overly detailed. You may find it valuable to get input from other workers who have performed the same job. Later, review the job steps with the

involved in an accident. The NSC offers defensive driving classes, both in-person and online. Employees learn defensive driving techniques that can reduce the chance of being involved in a motor accident, the factors that affect driving decisions, the conditions that affect driving and how to control them, the hazards involved with unsafe driving behaviors and more. See the website nsc.org for more information.

Workers’ compensation will cover employees while they are driving for work. Having appropriate safety policies and procedures can prevent injury and loss of life, and help control your costs. For more information, please contact us.



employee to make sure you have not omitted something. Point out that you are evaluating the job itself, not the employee’s job performance. Include the employee in all phases of the analysis—from reviewing the job steps and procedures to discussing uncontrolled hazards and recommended solutions.

Sometimes, in conducting a job hazard analysis, it may be helpful to photograph or videotape the worker performing the job. These visual records can be handy references when doing a more detailed analysis of the work.

If you find that a job is too complex or hazardous for you to develop solutions in-house, you can contact an expert. Depending on the type of problem, you could consult with your insurance company, the local fire department or private safety and health consultants. In addition, OSHA offers assistance through its regional and area offices and consultation services.

For more information on job hazard analysis and other safety procedures, please contact us. ■

Source: OSHA

Preparing for a Workers' Compensation Premium Audit

Your workers' compensation policy might include a provision that allows your insurer to conduct a worker's compensation premium audit. The results of the audit will affect your premiums, so it benefits you to be prepared!



Your workers' compensation premiums depend on two factors: your payroll and your classifications. Insurers assign a classification code to the employer based on industry. Your employees will also have occupational codes. These codes reflect the relative risks of the industry and the job. For example, in a relatively high-hazard industry like heavy construction, most employees will have high-hazard jobs; their occupa-

tional code would reflect that risk. But the bookkeeper and other office staff would have a lower risk of injury, so they would have different job codes.

Unless you're a smaller employer with a "minimum premium" policy, your workers' compensation policy likely includes a provision that allows your insurer

to conduct a worker's compensation audit. That's because your premiums are based on an estimate of your payroll and employees' job classifications. At the end of the policy period, an audit will determine the insurer's actual risk exposure based on exact payroll and classifications. This "audited exposure" determines whether you owe additional premium or whether the insurer owes you a refund.

Insurers may conduct an audit shortly after a poli-

cy starts to ensure the accuracy of their premium estimate. More commonly, they will conduct an audit at the end of the policy term. You might get audited annually or less frequently. If your policy has a three-year “lookback,” for example, the insurer reserves the right to audit premiums for the past three years. When it does, it can collect premiums owed for that time, but it will also refund you any overpayments you might have made.

Audits have another important function. The information on your organization’s payroll, classifications and loss experience will be pooled with data from other employers. These statistics help insurers more accurately predict their risk and rate their policies.

What Does an Insurer Look for in an Audit?

The insurer will look for three types of information:

- ✱ **Payroll information:** You’ll want a list of all employees and the hours they work, along with their payroll information. Payroll for workers’ compensation purposes may differ from payroll you report for tax purposes. This can include: wages or salaries; commissions; bonuses; overtime; and sick, holiday and vacation pay. Some states allow employers to count overtime pay as straight time, and you can generally exclude tips.
- ✱ **Job descriptions:** These should include a list of daily duties and where employees perform those duties. Be as accurate as possible. Job descriptions will determine

the employee’s occupational class, which determines the rate you’ll pay for coverage.

- ✱ **Independent contractors and subcontractors:** Be prepared by having pay information on any of your independent contractors. Your insurer might request it to ensure you are not avoiding paying workers’ compensation by misclassifying workers who should be classified as employees.

You might also need information on subcontractors’ employees, including occupational class and payroll. In some industries, particularly construction, a sub’s employees might not have adequate coverage, leaving the employer liable for claims. To avoid this, obtain certificates of insurance from your subcontractors, showing that they had workers’ compensation coverage on their employees during the time they worked for you.

To perform the audit, the insurer might simply send you a form to complete. If you get a paper-based (or web-based) audit request, respond as quickly and completely as possible.

Sometimes an insurer will want to do a physical audit, in which the auditor visits the employer’s location. If there are questions on your audit, or if you think the insurer has misclassified some of your employees, you might request a physical audit.

We can help you prepare for a workers’ compensation audit. For more information, please contact us. ■

Safe Workplaces Depend on Safe Behavior

Focusing your safety program solely upon reducing reported accidents and injuries or compliance with OSHA regulations means your safety and loss control program will never be completely successful. You’ll be applying all your controls to the tip of the iceberg, while major hazards may lurk unchecked.

Create a safety culture

Most accidents stem from some type of unsafe workplace behavior: whether it’s inattention, improper posture or improper use of safety equipment. Compliance with regulatory requirements alone seldom makes a real dent in your safety record. For example, if you pattern a safety program on OSHA safety and reporting requirements alone, using them as a benchmark to discipline workers who violate them, your safety program will be only tenuously related to safe workplace be-

haviors and ineffective at reducing accident levels. But creating a “safety culture” that tackles the attitudes, beliefs and values that govern behaviors related to safety—such as what motivates employees to be safe—will lead to an increase in safer behaviors overall.

Creating a corporate safety culture means investing resources, time and personnel into a vigorous occupational health and safety program that wins cooperation at all levels of the company. It looks at employee motivation by asking questions such as: what do workers get from an investment in safety? What needs do unsafe behaviors serve? Do employees feel responsible for what happens at work? Do they take too many risks—especially in response to management requests for speedier production or to make up for being understaffed? Does

the company send conflicting signals by rewarding unsafe behaviors when they raise production and punishing them when they cause injury?

Persuasion vs. punishment

Experts say that worker involvement in safety is proportional to the degree of management understanding, involvement and communication. In fact, worker involvement is as critical to your work safety program as it is to the production process itself. Without a genuine interest in working safely, safety manuals, training sessions and videos will have very little effect on employee work methods. Management lip service to safety via slogans, posters and dry safety meetings that don't generate actual improvements in working conditions conveys a lack of understanding and com-

mitment to safety.

But simply punishing unsafe behaviors won't work either, because the punishments may backfire, leading workers to continue the unsafe behavior while working harder to hide it from supervisors. Punishment can also give rise to frustration and aggression, leading employees who've been punished to reduce output, do substandard work, become careless with products and materials or initiate conflicts with coworkers and supervisors. Increasing rewards and positive reinforcement for safe behavior can help your safety program achieve the results you want.

In our next issue, we'll discuss ways to encourage safe behavior through incentive programs. If you would like more information in the meantime, please call our office.



When Seconds Count

More than 200,000 Americans die of sudden cardiac arrest every year. If one of your employees had a heart attack while at work, would someone there know what to do?

When blood flow or breathing stops, seconds count. Permanent brain damage or death can happen quickly. Knowing how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) could save a life. When a person's heart has stopped or he/she is no longer breathing, CPR can maintain circulation and breathing until emergency medical help arrives. Even if those who haven't had training can do "hands-only" CPR for a person whose heart has stopped beating. "Hands-only" CPR uses chest compressions to keep blood circulating until emergency help arrives.

If you've had training, you can use chest compressions and rescue breathing. Rescue breathing helps get oxygen to the lungs for a person who has stopped breathing.

Many organizations offer CPR training, including the American Red Cross. All employers should consider having at least one employee certified in CPR. (In fact, you might already have a certified employee on staff.) Depending on the size of your company and number of shifts, you might need more. Generally, certification takes only a few hours. To keep your skills up, you should repeat the training every two years. Post a list of CPR and first-aid certified employees at key locations in your building to ensure easy access during an emergency.



An automated external defibrillator (AED) provides another tool to help certain heart attack victims survive until emergency help arrives. Experts estimate that 50,000 heart attack victims could be saved every year if rescuers had access to an AED.

The most beneficial AED program is one that not only can provide an AED, but also integrates this life-saving equipment into a comprehensive program that includes clinical expertise and quality assurance to assure the highest level of responder preparedness. ■

