

# Toolbox Talks / Safety Meetings

## Toolbox Talk

"Toolbox talk" safety meetings are 5-15 minute meetings at the worksite, usually hosted by supervisors to discuss workplace safety with employees. The meetings are used to alert employees to specific safety hazards to prevent workplace accidents, occupational illnesses, and work-related injuries.

### Why Have Meetings?

Toolbox talks can be used to address problems on the job or in the shop. The supervisor leading the meeting can draw on the experience of employees and use that experience to remind everyone of the dangers of working with machinery, tools, equipment, and materials.

### What to Talk About

Meetings can address topics such as work practices, machinery, tools, equipment, materials, attitudes, and anything else that may cause or contribute to a work-related accident or illness. Keep the topic relevant. For example, if you have punch presses, talk about guarding or if you are building a structure, talk about fall protection. You can also choose a safety topic you think needs to be reviewed. If you notice that spills aren't being cleaned up promptly or if there has been an accident or a near-accident on the job, talk about it. For those, you can discuss what happened, where it happened, and how it can be prevented from happening again. Encourage employees to suggest topics for the meeting. They often know best what and where the dangers are.

### How to Run a Good Meeting

1. Hold the meeting on the worksite, preferably in a location where everyone can sit and relax.
2. Conduct the meeting at the beginning of the shift, right after lunch, or after a break.
3. Choose the topics carefully. Topics should be about health and safety problems that are pertinent to the job. Research the problem before the meeting to find easy-to-read material.
4. Manufacturer's operations manuals, safety data sheets, and your company's insurance carrier are all good sources of safety-related information. The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI-DWC) can supply you with a wide range of online publications on workplace safety and health.
5. Limit the scope of the topic. For example, it would be difficult to cover "Hand Tool Safety" in a 5-minute meeting. Instead, a more specific topic

such as "Defective Hand Tools" may be more appropriate.

6. Encourage as much employee participation as possible, yet stay within your time constraints to keep the meeting short.

### Sample Topics for Tailgate/Toolbox Meetings

1. Why are guards not put back on machines?  
Guards are placed on machines to prevent employees from encountering moving parts. Many people are killed or injured every year because guards are removed and not replaced.

Ask the group to give reasons for not replacing machine guards. Some common responses may include:

- I didn't have time to replace the guard.
- I wanted to make sure the machine was working okay and never got around to replacing the guard.
- I put on a new drive and the old guard didn't fit
- I had to remove the guard to adjust the machine
- I couldn't work with the guard on, because it slowed me down too much
- Listen, I've run these machines for years without guards and I've never been hurt.

All of the previous comments are simply excuses and have been given countless times. After an accident has happened and someone has been killed or injured, guards are replaced and strict rules are enforced to make sure the machine is never operated again without the guard.

However, it's now too late for the victim. The purpose of meeting on this topic is to make sure rules are always followed to keep accidents from happening.

### 2. Defective Hand Tools

- Show examples of actual hand tools found on the job with defects such as mushroomed heads, split or loose handles, dull or broken teeth, or sprung jaws. Ask the employees to point out the defects.
- Ask how many employees in the meeting have had an accident or know of an accident caused by defective tools.
- With employee input, agree on a method for reporting, removing from use, repairing or replacing defective hand tools at your operation.

