



UNIT-8

Taking Proactive Measures

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Apply hiring measures that can improve safety.

Unit 8

Taking Proactive Measures

Although you cannot refuse to hire a job applicant based on past workers compensation claims or safety violations, there are some steps that you can take during the hiring process to help keep the worker safe.

- Have an accurate job description. This will help the candidate decide whether or not they are suited for the position. This is particularly important for positions that require physical fitness.
- Be up-front about hazards and resolutions.
- During the interview, ask questions that will help identify the individual's tolerance for stress, teamwork ability, attention to detail, and communication skills.
- Ensure that the employee has appropriate certifications or is willing to get certified.

Test Your Knowledge

Safety Training

Training is crucial to maintaining a safe workplace. What safety training measures have you participated in?

A Word about Adult Learning

When we are teaching adults, we must be aware of the characteristics of adult learners. Adults often think they are finished with classroom learning until they find there are still problems to solve and issues to explore. In today's world, continuous learning is a key skill for everyone.

Adults are:

- Voluntary learners
- Problem-centered (no problem, not as interested in learning)
- Independent learners
- Experienced individuals whose experiences impact their learning
- Grouped according to interest or need

People who are new to a particular job or to the organization are at a very high risk for injuries. Often, this is simply because they lack the proper training and/or experience. To address this hazard, ensure that new staff receives safety training immediately. It may also be useful to team the new employee with a more experienced worker. And, make sure you cut them some slack when it comes to performance measures.

Young Workers

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health estimates that workers under the age of 24 are much more likely to be injured or killed on the job. There are several reasons for this:

- Teenagers are typically more prone to risk taking
- Young workers often perform work in areas that they have not been trained in
- Young workers are still growing, putting their organs at higher risk of certain injuries
- Young workers are often trying to prove themselves in the workplace and are reluctant to ask for help

(Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/youth/>)

To address these issues, make sure that young workers are only performing appropriate tasks and that they are properly trained for those tasks. Make sure that they know where to turn for help. You should also consult legislation in your area; some governments prohibit young workers from working in certain industries.

People with Illnesses and/or Disabilities

If an individual has an illness (chronic or acute) or a disability, these factors must be taken into consideration when assigning work tasks. In the case of illness, you may include a section in your safety plan that tells workers what to do if they're not feeling well. We suggest that the worker inform the supervisor and that the supervisor assign them less strenuous tasks. The supervisor must also make sure that the employee is not on medication that could interfere with their duties. (For example, many over-the-counter cold medications have warnings not to operate machinery while taking it.)

In the case of disabilities, supervisors must work with the person to ensure that they and their co-workers stay safe. Remember, it's an employer's responsibility to be as accommodating as possible.

Above all, don't create general policies, such as, "No persons in wheelchairs will be permitted to work in the factory." A blanket policy is a sure way to become the target of a discrimination lawsuit.

Immigrants

Immigrants are prone to workplace accidents for four main reasons:

- They feel they are more likely to be fired, even if they have legally immigrated.
- They may be unfamiliar with laws in the area where they work.
- English may be their second language.

- They often work in high-risk areas.

To resolve this, you will want to make sure that immigrants know their rights and obligations. When training, you may use a more visual approach, or you may have safety documents translated. Another approach is for managers to frequently check in with this risk group to answer questions and provide information.

People with Low Literacy Levels

Similar to immigrants, workers with low literacy levels may have a hard time understanding the safety policy. They are often too embarrassed to ask for help. To address this, use visual communications such as posters and videos. Another approach is for managers to frequently check in with this risk group and have a verbal conversation to address any weak areas of knowledge.

Temporary or Part-Time Workers

Temporary and part-time workers often get the short end of the stick when it comes to safety and job-related training. Because of this, they are particularly vulnerable to workplace injuries. Make sure your safety program is relayed to all employees as soon as they begin working for your organization, no matter how long they are there for. Likewise, make sure all employees are properly trained for the tasks that they are performing.

Shift Workers

There has long been a correlation between people who work long or irregular hours and injuries and illnesses. Shift workers who work late hours may feel tired and respond more slowly to hazards. As well, the night shift is often assigned to new personnel who are vulnerable to injury simply because of lack of experience. Shift workers may also miss out on safety events that take place during normal business hours, and they may have fewer resources available to them.

To resolve these issues, take these steps.

- Make sure shift workers get the same training as everyone else.
- Ensure a safety representative is present at night.
- Schedule more frequent breaks during shift work.
- Keep shift workers under close supervision. Encourage colleagues to monitor each other.
- Keep their schedules regular with adequate time off.
- Ensure ventilation and lighting are adequate in the work area.
- Provide alternate transportation (such as cab vouchers) in case an employee feels too tired to drive home.

Workers Who Work Primarily Outside the Workplace

Workers who telecommute or whose duties are typically performed outside of the workplace (for example, delivery drivers) may miss out on safety training and activities. They are also often isolated, meaning there's no one there to point out their safety errors.

To help correct these problems, ensure that these workers receive the same training as other staff. You may also want to set up a buddy system or have a supervisor monitor their work periodically to make sure they're working safely.

Workers with Personal Problems

Whether it's just a bad day or a more serious issue (such as drug or alcohol abuse or a gambling addiction), personal problems can distract anyone from their task. Even smoking can affect your productivity: think about how fidgety a smoker gets right before that next cigarette.

There's not much you can do to help this risk group except to pay attention and to listen. You may also want to have a safety policy stating that anyone who appears to be under the effects of drugs and/or alcohol will be sent home. As well, consider implementing workplace wellness programs to help employees deal with their personal issues.

Further Reading: