

New Employees Pose Special Safety Challenges

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Summer time has arrived, the Economy has improved and business is getting back to normal. Companies at last are expanding their business and with this many are adding new employees to payroll. With this, the need to conduct thorough training becomes critical, especially safety training.

Most new employees are excited to learn and eager to get started. However, even the simplest most routine tasks need to be mastered and put to memory. New employees bring a wide variety of work experiences with them; some good and some not so good. Old habits and behaviors often influence their thinking and actions. Younger workers are inexperienced and lack basic understanding of the complexities of the new job. These pose a challenge even to the most experienced trainers.

I remember when I was a young man just starting out working in a steel mill. I had a supervisor hand me a sheet of paper with a list of safety rules. He asked me to read and sign. That was it, I was trained in safety. Unfortunately, this is a situation all too often repeated. Safety training either isn't done or it isn't done well. This is a major mistake because this is a great time to impact the new employee's safety attitude, beliefs and behaviors. Once behaviors are developed, they become habits and are carried throughout life. Once developed, bad habits are extremely hard to break later on.

OSHA requires that each employer establish a Training Program that covers the following three areas:

- * General Safety Policies
- * OSHA Mandated Programs
- * Job or Site Specific Safety Hazards

The training has to be done in such a manner that the new employee understands the training provided and can use this training effectively to protect him/her in their daily work activity.

A New Employee Training Program starts out with a training plan. The plan should cover the items that will be included in training, the individuals or individual involved in the training, the length of time required for the training and follow up procedures that will be implemented.

A classroom trainer should be selected to cover those topics best covered in this format. The individual should know the training material thoroughly. He/she should be enthusiastic and have good training skills. Once the classroom training has been completed, the employee and trainer should sign the Training Sign-Off Form and a copy is to be put in the employee's personnel file.

After the initial training is completed, remember that regular follow-up with the new employee is critical to ensure continued safe behavior. The new employee should be encouraged to ask questions if he/she has any problems.

Safety should also be reinforced on an ongoing basis and the employee needs to be made aware that safety is not optional but is a mandatory requirement for continued employment.

Good effective training for new employees is your bridge to the future. Employees reflect the values that you instill in them. Good employees are worth their weight in gold and certainly worth the time and cost it takes to train them properly.

If you have any questions or need assistance with your Safety Program, please feel free to call me at 1-800-356-1274.