



Company Name: _____ Job Site Location: _____

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Foreman/Supervisor: _____

Topic 165: Distractions on the Job

Introduction: Most accidents and injuries occur when a worker is distracted while working. Following are safety guidelines to ensure that all workers are aware of the distractions that may occur while on the job, and how these distractions can be eliminated:

Mental distraction: Having a bad day at home and worrying about it at work is a hazardous condition. Dropping your 'mental' guard can pull you away from safe work procedures. You can be distracted when you are busy talking and a friend comes by to talk with you. A statistic because you took your eyes off the machine to talk "just for a minute." In the workplace, arguments, confusing instructions, conversations, cell phone bills, etc. Inattention would cause distractions. The prime interest in safety is in methods of defense, such as fall protection, safety glasses, guards, etc. For example, hazardous situations and warning signs are required to be posted.

Machinery: Set up your work station in a clear unobstructed location with good lighting, proper ventilation, and a foot traffic that would cause distractions. Make sure that everyone is at a safe distance away from a machine before starting. Station is stable and clear of trip hazards. Hands can be protected by using machinery that only turns when both hands are on the controls. Never by-pass the start up switch on the equipment you are using. When a machine does not start the way it was designed, inform your boss.

Hearing: Do not play loud music. Headphones can be a hazardous distraction. Ask your supervisor if wearing headphones is acceptable. Ear muffs are for loud noise levels to safeguard your hearing. Workers need to hear when important instructions or warnings are told. A co-worker may save your life.

Long hair: When your hair is loose and flowing, it can blow around and get in your face or eyes and obstruct your view. Avoid fixing your hair while working with machinery or operating a vehicle. Tie your hair back and keep it under a hat.

Driving: Avoid distractions such as:

- Tools and items not secure
- Doing paperwork
- Fastening a safety belt
- Trying to get out of a coat
- Bad windshield wipers
- Using a portable phone
- Eating a meal
- Listening to a radio
- Storing a glove compartment
- Loose or dropped items
- Looking at a map
- Reading
- Reaching for a cup
- Unsafe lane change
- Staring at other drivers

Consider this: 4 out of every 5 accidents are caused by unsafe acts, not unsafe conditions. Workers tend to look for "root causes" when an accident happens, because it is easier than looking for "root causes".

Shortcuts: Every day we make decisions we want to get the job faster and more efficient. Do time savers ever risk their own safety, or that of other crewmembers? Short cuts that reduce your safety on the job are not shortcuts, but an increased chance for injury.

Overconfidence: Confidence is a good thing. Overconfidence can be too much of a good thing. "It will never happen to me" is an attitude that can lead to improper procedures, mishandling of tools, or unsafe methods on the job. Any of these can lead to injury.

■ **Do not** start a task with incomplete instructions. To do the job safely and right the first time you need complete information. Have you ever been sent to do a job, having been given only part of the job's instructions? Ask for explanations about work procedures and safety precautions.

Poor housekeeping: When clients, managers, or safety professionals walk through your work site, housekeeping is an accurate indicator of overall safety. Poor housekeeping creates hazards of all types. A well-maintained area follows. Good housekeeping involves both pride and safety.

Ignoring safety procedures: Safety procedures can endanger you and your co-workers. You are being paid to follow safety procedures; not to make your own rules. Remember, being "casual" about safety can lead to a casualty.

■ **Being hasty** in starting a task can put you in harms way. Plan your work and then work your plan.

Problem solving: Once you have identified a distraction problem, meet with the worker to discuss what you have seen. Meet at a time and place when you think you will be relaxed and able to discuss the problem. When distraction problems occur, it is especially important to speak with respect. Address the distraction problem and encourage improvement. Do not judge the worker. Be relaxed and maintain a nonjudgmental attitude; this will help keep the lines of communication open, solve the problem, and maintain good relations. Starting the conversation is often the most difficult step. You may feel unsure about what to say or how to say it, or you may find yourself wanting to avoid the discussion altogether.

Remember: Concentrate on the work at hand, and keep your mind on your work. Utilize these guidelines to help you stay safe on the job.

Work Site Review

Work-Site Hazards and Safety Suggestions: _____

Personnel Safety Violations: _____

Employee Signatures: _____

(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

Foreman/Supervisor's Signature: _____

These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.

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