

Tool Box Talk

HAZARD RECOGNITION & CONTROL

JANUARY 2014

Hazard Recognition: Hazard recognition is a means of identifying, assessing and prioritizing hazards, both existing and potential. Hazards are always present, regardless of the location and it is imperative to be able to demonstrate hazard recognition in all areas and aspects of your workplace and personal life.

Employers have the legal responsibility to identify and control, to the best of their ability, workplace hazards to protect workers. Likewise, workers have the right to know about the hazards of the job and how to protect themselves, and the responsibility to ensure they are following company rules that outline the hazard and control process.

It is the responsibility of all workers to understand what a hazard is, what the dangers are, how they can affect people, property, and the environment, and how to prevent them. The goal of hazard recognition is not to place blame on individuals or become an enforcer, but to promote a safer workplace and improve teamwork and communication by creating better recognition and control habits. Hazards are to be dealt with and communicated in a timely manner to prevent incidents and injuries from occurring. How much time you spend recognizing and controlling hazards will affect the safety of your workplace.

The goal of a safe workplace is to prevent incidents and injuries from happening, and it takes all workers, regardless of role or seniority, to accomplish this. Recognition of hazards is of the utmost importance for the safety of all those that work for an organization.

Effective Hazard Control: A hazard assessment is performed by recognizing and assessing the existing and potential hazards of a worksite and assigning those hazard's controls with the goal of preventing an incident or accident from occurring.

- 1. Recognize and Understand:** You need to be able to recognize the hazard and understand how it will, or can, affect you, co-workers, property, and/or the environment. *Determine what hazards are present at the worksite.*
- 2. Assess:** Measuring the consequences of the hazard enables you to control or mitigate it. This is the *severity* of the hazard. The consequences should be prioritized on a "worst first" basis. *Assess the level of risk for the hazards identified.*
- 3. Control:** After you have placed the hazards in the order of "worst first", then you can assign at least one control for every high and medium hazard that was identified. Ideally, each hazard would have a combination of controls in place for protection if eliminating the hazard is not an option. *Implement strategies to eliminate or reduce the risk involved.*
- 4. Document:** All hazard assessments must be documented. Documentation must include all hazards, what controls are put in place for protection, and must be signed off by all workers related to that particular job. *Documentation and communication of the hazard to all others is key.*
- 5. Follow-up:** A hazard assessment must be revisited any time a condition or physical effect changes. For example, if rain develops and poses a new hazard, a new assessment must be conducted to discuss the new potential for harm and/or incident and what control(s) can be put into place. *Monitor and follow-up to ensure the control strategies chosen are implemented and effective.*

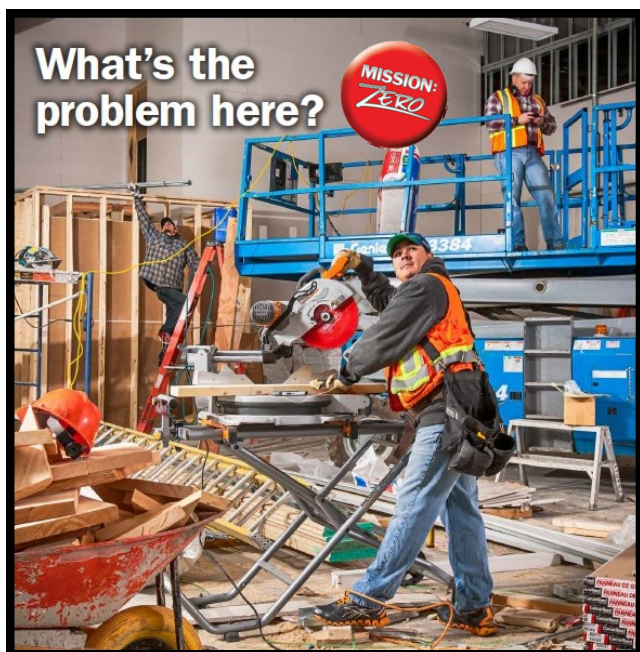
The challenge with hazard assessment and prioritization: Individuals perceive hazards differently. One individual may perceive a situation as hazardous with the potential to cause severe damage, while another perceives the same situation as minimally hazardous with lower risk. Hazard recognition and assessment is somewhat personal and is highly dependent on how hazards are perceived. This is why hazard recognition and control should be conducted utilizing a group of individuals all working together to allow for conversation about opinions regarding the severity and probability of hazards, taking into account various experiences, skills, knowledge, and the like.

Factors that influence hazard and risk perception include:

- 1. Personal Factors:** Experiences (positive or negative); knowledge and skill level; age; gender; physical ability and stature
- 2. Organizational Factors:** Safety management systems; training protocols and systems; leadership behaviours; peer behaviours
- 3. Situational Factors:** Stress; frustration, rushing; control; mind-set or frame of mind; complacency

Good Practices to Prevent Workplace Hazards: Prior to starting work, take a few moments to evaluate the work area and work activity for potential hazards and discuss their controls, maintain good housekeeping standards, inspect tools and equipment prior to use, maintain personal protective equipment as per the manufacturer's specifications, follow established procedures, do not take any shortcuts and report hazards and incidents as soon as possible.

By following these guidelines it is a very positive step towards the most important thing - going home safe at the end of each day to our families, friends and loved ones.



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