

OSHA's Training Guide

Is your safety training program all it could be? Have a look at OSHA's guidelines for setting up and conducting effective, compliant training.

Step 1. Determine if training is necessary. How do you know what training is necessary—or whether training is needed at all? Before you can answer that question, you have to ask yourself:

- Does an OSHA regulation or other law mandate safety training?
- Has there been an increase in workplace accidents recently?
- Are new processes, procedures, equipment, or substances being introduced into the workplace?
- Are employees performing certain jobs getting injured at a higher rate than other workers—for example, a high rate of back injuries among material handlers?
- Are hazardous operations conducted in the workplace, such as those involving hazardous chemicals or hazardous equipment?

Training best addresses problems such as:

- Lack of knowledge
- Unfamiliarity with equipment or substances
- Incorrect performance of a particular task

Step 2. Identify training needs. Once you know that training is necessary for certain needs and problems, you have to figure out what the training should accomplish.

OSHA says that if training is to familiarize employees with something new (a new piece of equipment, a recently introduced hazardous substance), you should gather all the information you can find about the issue—for example, operation manual, engineering data, MSDS, and any applicable OSHA standards. From these sources, you can pinpoint the information employees will need to know to work safely.

If the training deals with an existing job—such as the operation of a complicated stamping machine—you can conduct a job hazard analysis and determine where risks can be reduced or eliminated.

As for who needs training, OSHA says to train:

- Employees who are required to be trained by OSHA regulations
- Employees who may face particular hazards on the job
- Employees who may reasonably be expected to be assigned to a job that requires safety training
- Supervisors of these employees
- Technical supervisors or technicians who work in potentially hazardous areas

Step 3. Identify goals and objectives. What should training accomplish? OSHA emphasizes that safety training goals should be absolutely clear and put into written, action-oriented, specific language. An objective such as "being able to use a fire extinguisher" is too vague. A stronger objective is: "An employee will be able to tell where the fire extinguishers are located, which classification to use for which types of fires, and demonstrate how to operate a fire extinguisher safely."

Step 4. Design learning activities. The best training uses interactive learning activities that engage employees and are designed to resemble or simulate the actual job or situation. For instance, an appropriate learning activity for the example in Step 3 might be to have employees mark fire extinguisher locations on a floor plan and then demonstrate how to operate an extinguisher using the PASS technique.