



Hazard Identification: An Ongoing & Critical Safety Practice

What is a hazard? "a danger which threatens harm to employees" or "unsafe workplace conditions or practices (dangers) that could cause injuries or illness (harm) to employees."

To identify hazards in a workplace, use a systematic approach. There are various strategies that can be used, depending on your type of business. This is one approach:

Identify: Use periodic surveys, inspections and observation to identify workplace hazards. Look for hazards in materials, equipment, the environment and that could be caused by employees. According to SAIF about 3% of all accidents are caused by the first three of these. The remaining 97% are caused by the fourth category--people. Use individual interviews, walk-around inspections and both informal and formal observation programs to identify hazards that could be caused by people. Do not be looking to place blame; instead be looking for ways to improve safety.

Analyze: Once a potential hazard or unsafe work practice is identified, an analysis takes a closer look at the hazard to determine its nature and root cause. The analysis also looks at what must be accomplished to eliminate or reduce the impact of the hazard.

A good approach to analysis is to have employees who are the most familiar with the problem area go step-by-step through their job process. Write down and describe each step. (Have them perform the job five or six times to be sure nothing is missed.) Then analyze each step to determine its impact on the potential hazard(s) and how the hazard can be eliminated or reduced.

This is called a Job Hazard Analysis. You can also do a process analysis, which breaks a process down into its component parts.

Develop Solutions: Once the source of the hazard has been identified, develop ideas for possible solutions. Look at:

Engineering Controls - eliminate the hazard by redesigning equipment, changing processes, substituting materials, etc.

Management Controls - reduce exposure to hazards that engineering controls can not eliminate by establishing safe work procedures, work schedules, improving training and changing human behavior.

Interim Controls - when the desired changes can not be implemented immediately, use interim controls to eliminate or reduce worker risk until the final solution can be implemented.

Present Recommendations: Provide a report to management that gives them the information they need to make a decision concerning the hazard(s). Identify the hazard(s); give an analysis of the root cause(s); provide alternative solutions; and provide an ROI analysis showing the payback and benefits of each solution.

Implement the Changes: Make the changes management has approved.

Evaluate: Monitor, evaluate and get feedback on the effectiveness of the changes. Go back to the first step above. This is important to ensure that the changes addressed the problem, and whether it is necessary to make additional modifications or improvements.



IDENTIFY HAZARDS
IT'S EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY