

## Coffee Break Safety Training: How To Do It

Not all safety training needs to take an hour. Some lessons can be learned in 5 to 15 minutes. Today, our Safety Training Tips Editor focuses on just what they are.

Need to train in safety but little time to do it? You'd be amazed at how much you can cover in just 5, 10, or 15 minutes. For example, you could:

- Answer questions and address employee safety concerns
- Preview an upcoming safety training session or review key points from a previous session
- Demonstrate a new procedure or explain a new safety policy
- Ask employees for suggestions about ways to improve safety
- Brainstorm a solution to a specific safety problem
- Talk about a recent accident or near miss; identify the cause and discuss steps to prevent a future incident
- Discuss changes in an OSHA regulation or in-house safety rule
- Point out any unsafe acts or conditions you've noticed and ask employees to suggest ways to correct problems

### Consider the benefits of coffee break safety training.

As with any other safety training, the benefits of these quick meetings include fewer accidents and injuries, better compliance with regulations and safety rules, and increased safety awareness. But there are some other advantages to this approach:

- Coffee break sessions require minimal preparation.
- They take very little time from the workday.
- There's no need for pre-scheduling or reserving a meeting room.
- Coffee break sessions are fast and focused, so they hold employee attention and interest all the way through.
- They provide an excellent way to insert an important safety message into the workday.

If you have time to whip up a one-page handout with a few key training points, so much the better. Employees will have a written reminder to take back to the job, and that means they're more likely to apply what they've just learned to their work.

### Try a walkaround instead of a meeting once in a while.

An alternative to meeting with employees during a coffee break is to take your break at a different time from employees and use the time for some on-the-job training.

Walk around and observe employees at work. When you see an employee doing something right, reinforce the safe behavior with praise. If you see a worker doing something unsafe, take the opportunity to correct the behavior. Explain the possible consequences of continuing to work that way and express your concern for the employee's safety. Demonstrate the proper procedure. And then watch while the employee performs the procedure to make sure you've gotten the message across.

Maybe in the course of your walkabout you'll notice employees rushing to get work done, which could indicate unreasonable work schedules or workflow problems—things you need to follow up on. Other observations—like housekeeping falling off, can be put to good use as topics for upcoming coffee break training sessions.

Oh, and by the way, if you're training on a coffee break, you might want to have the company spring for the coffee, too.

### Why It Matters...

- *Safety training of any kind helps prevent accidents and injuries.*
- *You don't always have time to conduct a full half-hour or hour training session.*
- *Some safety topics don't take more than 5 or 10 minutes to cover.*
- *A short, focused safety message is more likely to hold employees' attention, which means they're more likely to remember it -- and use it on the job.*