Communication is one of the best ways to prevent accidents. And one of the best ways of communicating the importance of safety on a construction job is through toolbox talks. You don’t have to be a professional speaker to give a good toolbox talk. But there are ways you can make your talks more effective. Let’s take a look at them.

**How to Prepare**

Know your topic and plan your agenda a few days before the meeting so you’re well prepared. (Be able to present the talk without reading it and lead a discussion afterward.) Wherever possible, use actual equipment to illustrate your points. Coordinate hand-out literature or other material you intend to use at the meeting.

Limit the length of your presentation. Given your operation, you would be the best judge of how much time to set aside. Generally speaking, a half-hour is adequate. Allow for questions and answers afterward — about 15 minutes.

Use visual examples. There’s something to be said for seeing is believing. If you’re talking about ladders, have one handy so that you can point out such things as loose rungs or split side rails. If you plan to talk about the danger of using patched up hand tools, show a few samples. Consider a chisel with a mushroomed head, or a hammer with a taped handle.

Do a wrap-up. Reinforce the important points brought out during the meeting. Thank your staff for their interest and enthusiasm.

**How to Format the Meeting**

Start the meeting out on a positive note. After welcoming your staff, promote team work and how toolbox meetings not only provide valuable information, but give everyone the opportunity to get together and exchange ideas.

Be sure to compliment a job well done. Morale plays a bigger part than people think in affecting productivity and job satisfaction.

Keep it informal. Even though you may be using this resource as well as others, use your own words in making the actual presentation. For effective and rewarding results, do what’s comfortable for you.

Invite people to participate. The purpose of any toolbox talk is to get people to think about safety problems. Make the talk a hands-on session. Have your people name hazards and what to do about them. Encourage them to offer suggestions to improve safety. When asking questions, use open-ended questions instead of questions that require only a yes or no answer.

**Suggested Topics**

Choose only timely topics. Gear your talks to safety problems you are encountering at the moment or that you anticipate in upcoming jobs.

- **Review recent injuries or near misses:**
  - What happened?
  - Why did it happen?
  - What could have been done differently?
  - Injury reviews from prior months.

- **Review recent safety violations:**
  - What was the violation?
  - What injury could have occurred?
  - Input from new employees.
- Review upcoming work schedule:
  - What hazards concerned you?
  - What safety equipment should be used?
  - What procedures should be followed?
  - New equipment being used

Our safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are made solely to assist your organization in reducing hazards and the potential of hazards and accidents. These recommendations were developed from conditions observed and information provided at the time of our visit. They do not attempt to identify every possible loss potential, hazard or risk, nor do they guarantee that workplace accidents will be prevented. These safety evaluations, reports and recommendations are not a substitute for ongoing, well-researched internal safety and risk management programs. This report does not warrant that the property inspected and its operations are compliant with any law, rule or regulation.

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