

OSHA Training Guidelines

Training is an essential part of every employer's safety and health program for protecting workers from injuries and illnesses. Many researchers conclude that those who are new on the job have a higher rate of accidents and injuries than more experienced workers. If lack of knowledge of specific job hazards and of proper work practices is even partly to blame for this higher injury rate, then training will help to provide a solution.

It is highly recommended that the employer keep a record of all safety and health training. Records can provide evidence of the employer's good faith and compliance with OSHA standards. Documentation can also supply an answer to one of the first questions an accident investigator will ask: "Was the injured employee trained to do the job?"

Training in the proper performance of a job is time and money well spent, and the employer might regard it as an investment rather than an expense. An effective program of safety and health training for workers can result in fewer injuries and illnesses, better morale, and lower insurance premiums, among other benefits.

Many OSHA standards specifically require the employer to train employees in the safety and health aspects of their jobs. Other OSHA standards make it the employer's responsibility to limit certain job assignments to employees who are "certified," "competent," or "qualified"-meaning that they have had special previous training, in or out of the workplace.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 does not address specifically the responsibility of employers to provide health and safety information and instruction to employees, although Section 5(a)(2) does require that each employer " . . . shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act." However, more than 100 of the Act's current standards do contain training requirements.

Therefore, OSHA has developed voluntary training guidelines to assist employers in providing the safety and health information and instruction needed for their employees to work at minimal risk to themselves, to fellow employees, and to the public.

The following is a summary of the OSHA Training Guidelines. A complete copy can be obtained from the OSHA web site at www.osha.gov or through the link at the end of this article.

Training Guidelines

OSHA's training guidelines follow a model that consists of:

- Determining if Training is Needed
- Identifying Training Needs

- Identifying Goals and Objectives
- Developing Learning Activities
- Conducting the Training
- Evaluating Program Effectiveness
- Improving the Program

Determining If Training is Needed

The first step in the training process is a basic one to determine whether a problem can be solved by training. Whenever employees are not performing their jobs properly, it is often assumed that training will bring them up to standard. However, it is possible that other actions (such as hazard abatement or the implementation of engineering controls) would enable employees to perform their jobs properly.

Ideally, safety and health training should be provided before problems or accidents occur. This training would cover both general safety and health rules and work procedures, and would be repeated if an accident or near-miss incident occurred.

Problems that can be addressed effectively by training include those that arise from lack of knowledge of a work process, unfamiliarity with equipment, or incorrect execution of a task. Training is less effective (but still can be used) for problems arising from an employee's lack of motivation or lack of attention to the job. Whatever its purpose, training is most effective when designed in relation to the goals of the employer's total safety and health program.

Identifying Training Needs

If the problem is one that can be solved, in whole or in part, by training, then the next step is to determine what training is needed. For this, it is necessary to identify what the employee is expected to do and in what ways, if any, the employee's performance is deficient. This information can be obtained by conducting a job analysis which pinpoints what an employee needs to know in order to perform a job.

If an employer's learning needs can be met by revising an existing training program rather than developing a new one, or if the employer already has some knowledge of the process or system to be used, appropriate training content can be developed.

The company's accident and injury records can help identify how accidents occur and what can be done to prevent them from recurring. This is good information to jump start a training program. Observing employees at their workstation while they are performing their job tasks is another useful tool in identifying training needs. Ask the employees questions about their job and what they consider to be "at risk" activities and then focus on those issues when developing your training programs.

Identifying Goals and Objectives

Once the employees' training needs have been identified, employers can then prepare objectives for the training. For an objective to be effective it should identify as precisely as possible what the individuals will do to demonstrate that they have learned, or that the objective has been reached. They should also describe the important conditions under which the individual will demonstrate competence and define what constitutes acceptable performance.

For example, rather than using the statement: "The employee will understand how to use a respirator" as an instructional objective, it would be better to say: "The employee will be able to describe how a respirator works and when it should be used."

Developing Learning Activities

Once employers have stated precisely what the objectives for the training program are, then learning activities can be identified and described. Learning activities enable employees to demonstrate that they have acquired the desired skills and knowledge. To ensure that employees transfer the skills or knowledge from the learning activity to the job, the learning situation should simulate the actual job as closely as possible.

The determination of methods and materials for the learning activity can be as varied as the employer's imagination and available resources will allow. The employer may want to use charts, diagrams, manuals, slides, films, videotapes, or simply blackboard and chalk, or any combination of these and other instructional aids. Whatever the method of instruction, the learning activities should be developed in such a way that the employees can clearly demonstrate that they have acquired the desired skills or knowledge.

Conducting the Training

With the completion of the steps outlined above, the employer is ready to begin conducting the training. To the extent possible, the training should be presented so that its organization and meaning are clear to the employees.

An effective training program allows employees to participate in the training process and to practice their skills or knowledge. This will help to ensure that they are learning the required knowledge or skills and permit correction if necessary. Employees can become involved in the training process by participating in discussions, asking questions, contributing their knowledge and expertise, learning through hands-on experiences, and through role-playing exercises.

Evaluating Program Effectiveness

To make sure that the training program is accomplishing its goals, an evaluation of the training can be valuable. Training should have, as one of its critical components, a method of measuring the effectiveness of the training. Evaluation will help employers or supervisors determine the amount of learning achieved and whether an employee's performance has improved on the job.

The ultimate success of a training program may be changes throughout the workplace that result in reduced injury or accident rates. However the evaluation is conducted the results can give employers the information necessary to decide whether or not the employees achieved the desired results, and whether the training session should be offered again at some future date.

Improving the Program

If, after evaluation, it is clear that the training did not give the employees the level of knowledge and skill that was expected, then it may be necessary to revise the training program or provide periodic retraining.

In summary, information is readily available to help employers identify which employees should receive safety and health information, education and training, and who should receive it before others. Employers can request assistance in obtaining information by contacting such organizations as OSHA Area Offices, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, OSHA-approved State programs, State onsite consultation programs, the OSHA Office of Training and Education, or local safety councils.

The following links will provide a listing of the OSHA standards that require training along with a copy of the voluntary training guidelines summarized above.

[OSHA Training Requirements](#)

[Training Requirements in OSHA Construction Industry Standards and Training Guidelines](#)