

Common Sense

There are a number of safety problems common to most workplaces and job sites that can be solved with a little common sense. Planning and thinking ahead can help eliminate most of these hazards. Take a close look at your workplace with these suggestions in mind.

Eliminate junk piles. Remove trash, broken parts, and scrap from work areas, walkways, storerooms, and neglected corners. Look for materials that have been stacked improperly. An unstable stack is a real danger to anyone who may be near if the material suddenly falls. Check such things as wood pallets, storeroom boxes, construction materials and even office files to see that materials are stacked properly.

If personal protective clothing is needed, then make it readily available. Ear protection, eye protection, hard hats, gloves, safety shoes or other protective clothing and equipment must be worn according to the hazard exposure. Make sure all electric power tools are grounded. Protect yourself from electric shock by using tools with three-prong plugs, a ground-fault system or double insulation. Never cut off the ground plug on a three-prong plug. Check electrical cords and wires for any damage. Guard power tools and moving machine parts. Tools and equipment should never be operated with the guards or shields removed.

Inspect portable ladders to make sure they are secure and don't shake or wiggle. Non-slip feet are a must. If a ladder seems weak, get rid of it – don't let others use a defective ladder. Mark it defective and throw it away.

Fire extinguishers are a must and should be mounted properly, readily accessible, and in working order. Check fire regulations to make sure they are properly placed and the right type for your work area. Extinguisher inspections should be made regularly then tagged to show when and who performed the inspections.

Exits should be clearly marked with easy to read signs placed above the doors. Signs with arrows should also be used to guide people to the exit if the layout of the workplace is confusing to those unfamiliar with your facility. Illuminated signs should be kept in working order at all times. Don't block exits or signs with vehicles or material. Another good idea is to mark doors that are not exits with "This is Not An Exit," "Restroom," "Storeroom" or "Closet."

Safety meetings are one of the most important parts of a good safety program, so hold them regularly. Impress upon every worker that it's important that they take every precaution to keep the workplace safe. Both employee and employer attitudes toward safety provide a key to a successful safety program. Posters, handouts, and training programs can all be part of your safety communication.