

# SAFETY MEETINGS

Give 'em What They Want



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# INTRODUCTION

Safety meetings are a vital link between employees and safety professionals. These meetings may provide the most impact on co-worker safety. The challenge for you is to convey crucial safety information in a way that is instructive, motivational and yet doesn't put people to sleep.

Just as you ask employees to learn new skills on the job, you will need to learn new techniques yourself. You will need to understand how adults learn, so you present material effectively to your adult co-workers. You also need to know:

- How to plan a meeting
- How to get people involved
- How to get results.

In addition, you should understand what it takes to make safety meetings both relevant and polished.

This handbook is designed to prepare you to conduct a top-notch safety meeting. Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned veteran in search of new ideas, it will take you through the process of designing a memorable meeting.



# ADULT LEARNING

It is important you know how to approach the people who attend your safety meetings. You can waste even the most pertinent information. In order to set the proper tone for learning and retaining information, you should understand some key points about your audience:

**Respect.** Your co-workers know a lot about how your workplace functions. They have learned from years spent on the job and also from their own life experiences. At times, they may know more about an individual subject than you do. Respect what they bring to the table. If you fail to recognize their knowledge, you will deprive yourself of valuable information and lose the respect of the group.

**Practicality.** People who attend your safety meetings are adults. As such, they want practical information to make their lives better. In general, they want to learn how to do a job better, faster or safer. Or maybe they want to learn a skill that will improve their lives away from work.



# ADULT LEARNING

**Efficiency.** Your adult audience members have busy lives. Their workloads may be very heavy. Chances are, their home lives are full, too. Because of this, they want you to make the most efficient use of their time. Workers respect you when you run well-organized meetings that end as scheduled or earlier. At the same time, they lose faith in you if meetings run long and waste their valuable time.

**Timeliness.** Start meetings on time, every time. This is another way to demonstrate to the group that you value their time. Employees will see that you are organized and businesslike, and they will respect you for it.

## SOMETHING MORE...

*If possible, you should schedule safety meetings early in a shift. Workers are more likely to benefit from meetings, if their minds are fresh and not distracted by the prospect of getting off work soon or having a meal break.*



# FOCUS AND PLANNING

Before you begin your safety meeting, set a goal and plan how to reach it.

**Look around.** Analyze your workplace as you consider what you want your safety meetings to achieve. Look for areas that need improvement. Listen carefully to what workers have to say. By being observant, you can identify weaknesses that need addressing.

**Requirements.** It is crucial you know which safety requirements apply to your workplace. Include these topics as you begin writing a calendar of meeting topics. These will probably be the most important subjects you will cover.

## SOMETHING MORE...

*There is a difference between a safety meeting and an in-depth training session. A safety meeting is shorter in length and sticks to issues that can be resolved in the given time. For more complex training, schedule a session outside the safety meeting.*

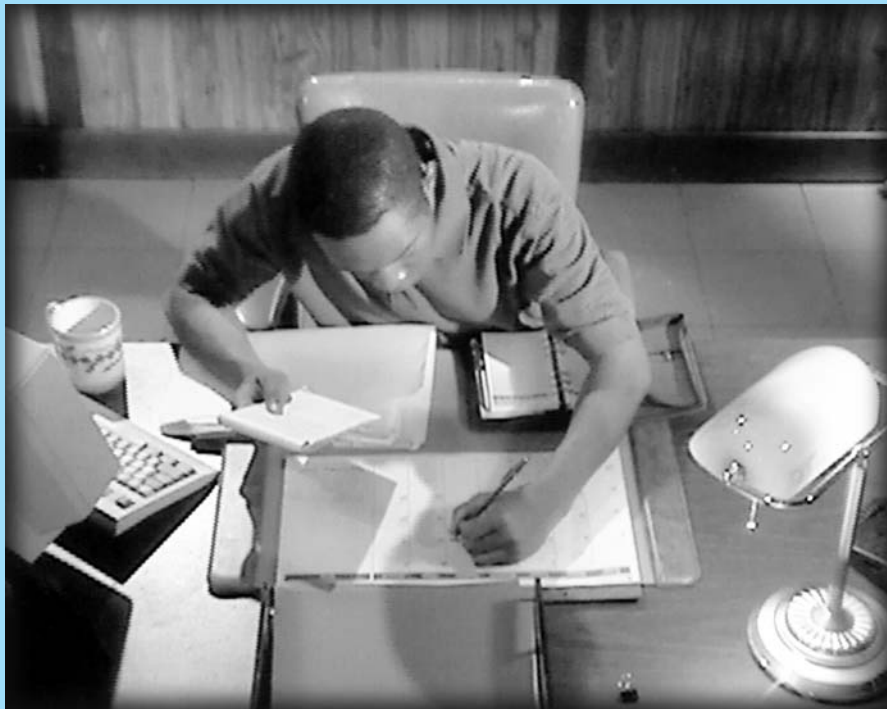


# FOCUS AND PLANNING

**Agenda.** Be sure to write an agenda prior to every meeting. The agenda outlines the main points you plan to cover and in what order. Post each agenda prior to the meeting. This tells employees what to expect and allows them time to consider ways they can contribute.

**Allocate Time.** On the agenda, allot time for each of the main points. This way, you make sure you have planned a safety meeting that is substantial but not overly full. It is better to scale back your agenda and leave enough time to settle matters than to plan to do too much and leave some issues unresolved.

**Follow Up.** Include on your agenda time to discuss any matters that were not settled at the previous meeting. In addition, your agenda should include a list of decisions reached at the last meeting and any follow-up that has either taken place or needs to occur.



# AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT

Getting people involved in the safety meeting may be the biggest challenge you face. It is easy enough to get the group to attend, but it is another thing to make them sit up and take notice. People who are passive in meetings are less likely to learn than those who show an active interest in what is being said.

**Listen.** The surest way to get people involved is to listen to what they have to say. It is not enough to look like you are listening or to listen halfway. You must concentrate, listen with an open mind and otherwise show interest in what employees have to say.

**Feedback.** After listening, give appropriate feedback. This may include praise, clarification or redirection. Praise people who make key points in meetings. Clarify points that come close to the mark. Gently redirect statements that miss the point, but in such a way that the speaker is not embarrassed. Avoid using negative language, such as, "That's wrong."

## SOMETHING MORE...

*Be honest when you give feedback. Don't agree with someone when you really disagree. That person may sense you are being less than honest and lose trust in you.*

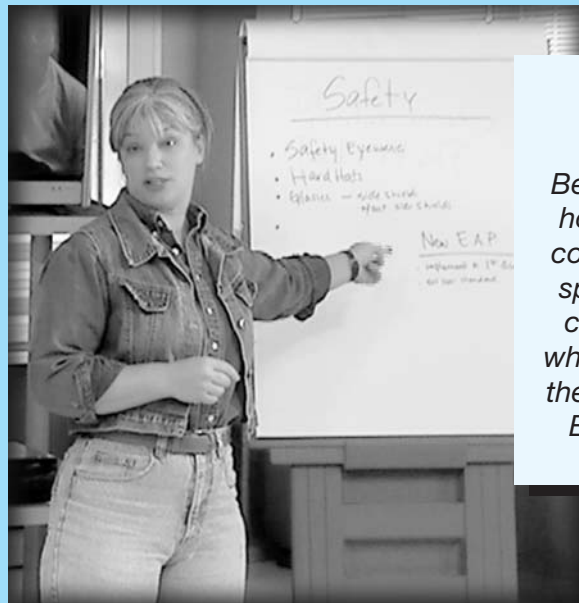


# GETTING RESULTS

To make sure safety meetings are as effective as possible, spend the majority of the time allotted on brainstorming new ideas and problem solving.

**Brainstorming.** This is a way to get new ideas. Brainstorming can breathe life into dull safety meetings. First, you need to open the meeting for comments on a given topic. Then, stay positive, encouraging people to participate. Have some fun and loosen the reins while not losing control. Finally, list all the comments made, not just those you think are valuable.

**Seeking Solutions.** When you've brainstormed ideas, decide on solutions. Open decision-making to the group. Listen to their opinions, then set a course of action. Write down decisions reached, noting who is responsible for each future action. Remember, it is ultimately up to you to make sure the group gets results. You may need to check with the person responsible to make sure the job is done. Be ready to offer help. Most importantly, report results to the group, so people can see that decisions made during safety meetings are carried out.



## SOMETHING MORE...

*Be prepared to handle hostile or challenging comments. Let people speak up, within time constraints. Address what is said, then move the discussion forward. Be friendly but firm.*

# RELEVANCY

Safety meetings must be relevant to workers' daily lives for the workers to value them. Look for topics that relate to people's lives away from work.

**Off-the-Job Safety.** These topics include:

- Sports safety
- Safe use of home chemicals
- Personal security
- Gardening safety
- Vacation safety.

You should find it easy to come up with issues relevant to workers' lives away from work. If you have trouble, start paying closer attention to what your co-workers tell you about their lives.

**Do Your Homework.** If you decide to address off-the-job safety issues, make sure you do your homework. Just because you can play baseball does not mean you know all about the appropriate safety gear that should be worn. Many organizations promote safety in sports, in the home and away from home. You can research safety issues in their publications or on their Web sites. You can also purchase safety products from vendors.



# FINISHING TOUCHES

In order for the crew to have confidence in what you are saying, you need to have confidence in yourself. At the very least, look and sound like you know what you are doing. You can improve your public speaking by following some common-sense techniques.

**Relax.** Many people feel nervous speaking in front of a group, especially when they first get started. So, if your voice quivers or your mouth gets dry, you are not alone. The best thing you can do is to relax. Take a few deep breaths before entering the meeting room.

**Voice.** Vary your tone and speech patterns. Make sure the pitch of your voice goes up and down. Speed up your delivery, then slow it down for emphasis. The idea is to sound natural — not nervous — and excited about your subject. You may want to pause to draw attention to what you are about to say or speak louder to emphasize other points.

**Movement.** Your audience will stay more alert if you move around the room. Moving your hands and arms can underscore what you are saying. Walking around the room keeps the audience alert, because they will wonder where you are going next. If you stand in front of someone, they are more likely to pay attention.



## SOMETHING MORE...

*Consider videotaping one of your safety meetings. It will give you a chance to evaluate your presentation skills. Make notes on which speech patterns or habits to avoid and which to use again.*

# FINISHING TOUCHES

Audio-visual equipment can be used to reinforce content and to add variety to meetings. Different tools are better for different situations.

**Dry Erasure Boards, Overhead Projectors and Flip Charts.** These tools are best used when highlighting major points or reviewing a detailed list.

**Videotapes or CD-ROMs.** Use videotapes or CD-ROMs when you want to demonstrate a technique, standardize a presentation or model a desired change in behavior. These often have real-life scenarios that can be both compelling and motivational.

**Computer-Assisted Graphics.** You can design your own presentation by using a computer program. Include as much content as you can using these programs. By using the computer to build your own graphics, you have absolute control over the content. These presentations have a professional look.

**Handouts.** Don't overlook the value of handouts. These may not have the flair of the other tools, but they do have a purpose. Handouts can remind people what you taught and provide a reference for their work station.



# SUMMARY

Safety meetings are most effective when they are well-organized, concise and interesting. It is up to you to set the appropriate tone for the meetings; it is up to the group to follow suit.

Here are key points to remember:

- Treat your audience as adults.
- Plan meetings in advance.
- Assess safety needs.
- Draft and post a meeting agenda.
- Get the group involved.
- Reach decisions and follow through.
- Keep topics relevant.
- Use audio-visual equipment to add interest.

If you give safety meetings serious thought, you can have sessions people want to attend, rather than ones they simply endure.



# SELF-EVALUATION & CHECKLIST

Fill out this self-test worksheet following your next few safety meetings to rate your progress.

1. Were you prepared in advance for the meeting? Yes No  
Describe the steps to prepare for a meeting.

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2. Did you treat members of the group as adults? Yes No  
Give two examples of ways in which you respected the experience and maturity of the group.

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3. Did you prepare an agenda and post it prior to the meeting? Yes No



# SELF-EVALUATION & CHECKLIST ■

4. Did you seek employee involvement? Yes    No  
List some of the ways you tried to get your audience involved.

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5. Give some examples of feedback you gave before, during or after the meeting.

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6. Did you write down any decisions reached? Yes    No  
Describe ways you ensured the group's decisions would lead to the appropriate action.

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# SELF-EVALUATION & CHECKLIST ■

7. Did you remember to include safety issues Yes    No  
relevant to your co-workers' lives away from the workplace?

8. How would you evaluate your presentation skills?

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Voice \_\_\_\_\_

Movement \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did you use audio-visual equipment to enhance Yes    No  
your presentation?  
Which equipment did you use and for what purpose?

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10. Do you think you communicated your Yes    No  
safety message in a clear, concise and compelling way?  
How could you improve your performance next time?

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# PRE-MEETING CHECKLIST

- Schedule time and meeting place.
- Assess needs of the group prior to meeting.
- Write and post a meeting agenda.
- Make sure the meeting room is comfortable, such as room temperature, lighting and seating arrangements.
- Start the meeting on time.



## INTERACTIVE CD-ROM COURSES FROM COASTAL

- Asbestos Awareness
- Back Safety
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Confined Space Entry
- Defensive Driving
- Electrical Power Generation
- Electrical Safety
- Employment Terminations
- Environmental Awareness
- Ergonomics
- Fall Protection
- Fire Safety
- First Aid
- Forklift Safety
- Hazard Communication
- Hearing Protection
- HAZMAT Preparation
- HAZMAT Transportation
- HAZWOPER Awareness
- Hydraulics
- Indoor Cranes
- Industrial Electricity
- Interviewing
- Lab Safety
- Lockout/Tagout
- Office Safety
- Performance Appraisals
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Pneumatics
- Respiratory Protection
- Safety Orientation
- Sexual Harassment
- Stairways and Ladders
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Trenching and Shoring
- Walking and Working Surfaces
- Vibration Analysis

## VIDEO-BASED PROGRAMS FROM COASTAL

- Accident Investigation
- Anhydrous Ammonia
- Asbestos Series
- Back Safety Series
- Behavior-Based Safety Series
- Bloodborne Pathogens Series
- Chemical Handling Series
- Chlorine Safety Series
- Commercial Driver Series
- Confined Space Series
- Contractor Safety
- Construction Safety Series
- Crane Safety Series
- Disaster Planning Series
- DOT Drug & Alcohol Testing
- Driving Safety Series
- Electrical Safety Series
- Electrical Power Generation Series
- Emergency Planning Series
- Employment Terminations
- Environmental Series
- Ergonomics Series
- Fall Protection Series
- Fire Safety Series
- First Aid
- First Aid for Schools
- Foot Protection
- Forklift Safety Series
- Groundskeeping Safety
- Hand Safety
- Hand Tool Safety Series
- Handwashing
- Hard Hat Safety
- Hazard Communication for Schools
- Hazard Communication Series
- HazWaste Transportation Series
- HAZMAT Transportation Series
- HAZWOPER Training Series
- Hearing Protection
- Heat Stress
- Highway Work Zone Series
- Hotel Safety Orientation
- Hydrogen Sulfide
- Indoor Cranes
- Interviewing
- ISO 9000 Series
- Lab Safety Series
- Laser Safety
- Lead Safety
- Line Breaking
- Lockout/Tagout Series
- Low-Lift Trucks
- Machine Guarding
- Mechanical Power Press Safety
- Media Relations
- Motor Vehicle Awareness
- Off-the-Job Safety Series
- Office Safety
- OSHA Inspection Series
- Performance Appraisals
- Phosphoric Acid
- Pollution Prevention Series
- PPE Series
- Pro-Active Safety Series
- Process Safety Series
- RCRA
- Respiratory Protection Series
- Rope Rescue Series
- Safety Orientation
- Sexual Harassment
- Slips, Trips & Falls
- Stairways and Ladders
- Static Electricity
- Substance Abuse Prevention Series
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Train the Trainer Series
- Trenching & Shoring Series
- Tuberculosis Awareness
- Walking & Working Surfaces
- Welding Safety Series
- Winter Safety Series
- Workplace Violence

## ILLUSTRATED HANDBOOKS FROM COASTAL

- Asbestos Series
- Back Safety
- Bloodborne Pathogens for Schools
- Bloodborne Pathogens Series
- Chemical Handling Series
- Chlorine Safety
- Confined Space Series
- Contractor Safety
- Driving Safety Series
- DOT Drug & Alcohol Testing
- Electrical Safety Series
- Environmental Series
- Ergonomics Series
- Eye Protection
- Fall Protection Series
- Fire Safety
- First Aid for Schools
- First Aid on the Job
- Foot Protection
- Forklift Safety Series
- Hand Safety
- Hazard Communication Series
- HAZMAT Transportation Series
- HAZWOPER Training Series
- Hearing Protection
- Heat Stress
- Holiday Safety Series
- Hotel Safety
- Hydrogen Sulfide
- Indoor Cranes
- Interviewing
- Lab Safety
- Lead Safety
- Lockout/Tagout Series
- Low-Lift Trucks
- Machine Guarding
- Mechanical Power Press Safety
- Office Safety
- Performance Appraisals
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Pollution Prevention Series
- Pro-Active Safety Series
- Process Safety
- Respiratory Protection
- Safety Orientation
- Scaffold Safety Series
- Sexual Harassment
- Slips, Trips & Falls
- Stairways and Ladders
- Static Electricity
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Trenching & Shoring Series
- Tuberculosis Awareness
- Vacation/Summer Safety
- Video Display Terminals
- Walking & Working Surfaces
- Warehouse Safety
- Winter Safety Series
- Workplace Violence



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