

New Employee Safety Orientation

What do the US's largest theme park, a construction company and a quick service restaurant have in common? They all have a risk management department that identifies employee training as key to controlling losses and preventing employee injuries.

In a time when insurance premium costs, including workers compensation, are typically second only to salary expense as an operating cost for businesses, preventing employee injuries is vital to success. Training is a key element in controlling these costs. The first step is an effective new employee safety orientation. Statistics have indicated that as many as 50% of all job injuries occur to new employees with less than six months experience on the job.

WHY ARE NEW EMPLOYEE SAFETY ORIENTATIONS SO IMPORTANT?

1. It introduces a new employee to your company's safety culture. It establishes the value you place on the employee and the importance the company assigns to safe work practices.
2. It demonstrates to new hires the equipment, safe work practices and processes that are associated with their job tasks. Although some new employees are "experienced," it does not mean they are trained in how to safely perform a task within your operation. The goal of new employee safety orientation is to assure that all workers follow the same operational and safety practices, which helps to safeguard the entire workforce.

OSHA violations frequently involve deficiencies in employee training. Due to the constantly changing work environment, this is no surprise. In the event of repeated violations, employers may face fines for serious/willful misconduct. This could include lack of appropriate and documented employee training. In the event of a serious injury, litigation and criminal prosecution could result.

GETTING STARTED

Good trainers can make a poorly developed program work well and a well-developed program work great. Bad trainers can make neither work. The days of long lectures are over. For an orientation to be effective, care must be taken to prepare the materials and select a proper setting. You can't just show a video, or hand the new employee a safety pamphlet and tell him or her to read it, then sign a form indicating it was provided and understood. Employee orientation materials must be clearly communicated, both verbally and in writing. Company rules or equipment procedures must be thoughtfully written in a way that the employee will understand. Materials may need to be available in other languages.

Prepare for orientation and training by practicing your talk. The number one anxiety at work situation is public speaking. If you are unsure about your speaking ability, then practice. For improvement in your presentation, present it to your spouse or friends and ask for constructive criticism. Supervisors must practice communication skills to ensure new hires will clearly understand the information they share. Never assume safe work practices are just "common sense."

EXPLAIN AND DEMONSTRATE

Good trainers are not born, they learn by experience. Remember the basic rules of any training session:

- **Tell the employee what they are going to learn.**
- **Teach them verbally and with supporting documentation.**
- **Show them by example when possible.**
- **Have the employee demonstrate their knowledge.**
- **Correct and follow-up until the performance is acceptable.**

Be sure to complete the orientation before the employee actually starts work. Failure to do so could result in an avoidable injury and/or facility damage. Employee orientations are often done jointly by the human resources department, safety director and the immediate supervisor. If a language barrier exists, use bi-lingual personnel to assist in the orientation.

WHAT TRAINING IS NECESSARY?

The new employee must be familiarized with general rules of conduct, code of safe practices specific to their job, general safety rules and other administrative procedures. These can be delivered in a one-on-one setting or in a classroom environment. However, training for equipment and vehicle operations is best accomplished on the worksite where employees can learn hands-on. Equipment operator certification will be necessary for some equipment such as forklifts and power tools.

ORIENTATION TOPICS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- General employee safety rules
- Code of safe practices specific to job operations
- Company rules of conduct and disciplinary procedures
- Prompt reporting of all work-related incidents and unsafe conditions
- Safe lifting and material handling techniques, including demonstration
- Equipment training and certification (shoring, cranes, forklifts, vehicles, equipment, machinery and power tools, etc.)
- Special hazard training (hazard communication program, confined space entry, log-out/tag-out procedures, any toxic or hazardous substances, fall protection, etc.)
- Selection, use and care of required personal protective equipment
- Location of fire alarms and fire extinguishers
- Location of first aid kits
- Safety signage
- Emergency action plan

SETTING

Better retention of new information will be accomplished if the orientation is done in a quiet office or small meeting room. Avoid distractions, loud work environments or noisy equipment if possible, to assure that full attention can be given to the matters discussed.

DOCUMENTATION

All employee orientations must be documented. We recommend using a customized checklist. Items covered during the orientation are listed and the bottom of the form is signed and dated by the trainer and the employee. (Note: A document example that must be customized for your specific operation is included at the end of this article). Orientation and other training records should be kept in the employee's personnel file.

JOB TRANSFERS AND REHIRES

If an employee is transferred to a new department, a new orientation should be done specific to the duties of the new job. This could include the code of safe practices for construction operations, for example, or training and certification for specific process and/or equipment use. If an employee leaves the company and returns later, you should do a complete new employee safety orientation again, including all documentation.

FOLLOW UP

Never assume that new hires retain all the training information provided. Also, remember that everybody learns at a different rate. Use the Ask, Pause, Call (APC) method.

Ask
the question.

Pause
to allow employee to think. The questions should be used to gauge the effectiveness of the instruction. Do the attendees look perplexed or confused?

Call
on someone to answer the question. Calling on someone allows others to think about the answer too.

After the initial orientation, it is good practice for the immediate supervisor to stay in close contact with the new employee for at least a couple of weeks. Assigning a trusted, experienced co-worker to act as mentor is also a good idea. The more hazardous the work, the more important this follow-up step. Any unsafe actions or behaviors observed should be corrected in a constructive way.

CONCLUSION

Employee orientation is a vital part of assuring a workforce of quality employees. It must not be overlooked. Never assume that an experienced employee does not need orientation. They may be experienced at another facility, but must be trained by your company to be qualified for work. Orientation must be completed before the employee actually begins work, and it must be documented.

GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to know more about new Employee Safety Orientation for your workplace you can contact your local StarStone Workers' Compensation representative.

www.starstone.com

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HAVING RECEIVED SAFETY ORIENTATION AND TRAINING INCLUDING CODE OF SAFE PRACTICES

I acknowledge having received the company's new employee safety orientation and code of safe work practices. I have read the safety rules and I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about them. I agree to abide by these safety rules, and I understand that my failure to follow these safety rules may result in discipline up to and possibly including termination. I further understand that it is my responsibility to report all unsafe conditions or violations to my supervisor or other management personnel immediately.

I have received safety training in my particular job assignment and have read the following:

- Safety Policy Statement
 - Code Of Safe Practices
 - Safety Policy Enforcement Procedures And Rules
 - Incident Reporting Procedures
 - Reporting Of Unsafe Conditions
 - Proper Material Handling Techniques
 - Equipment Training
 - Specific Hazard Training
 - Hazard Communication Training Including Sds Training
 - Personal Protective Equipment Use And Care
 - Locations Of Fire Alarms And Extinguishers
 - Locations Of First Aid Kits
 - Safety Signage
 - Emergency Action Plan
 - Job Specific Safety Rules (specify)
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Specific Equipment Operation/Certification (Specify)

Employee Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____

Orientation Date: _____