



Giving Safety Talks

A guide for the construction sector

SELF-DIRECTED GUIDE



Alberta Workforce Essential Skills
Skilled people. Safe, profitable workplaces.

Giving Safety Talks: A guide for the construction sector

- Facilitator Guide
- Participant Workbook
- Self-Directed Guide
- 50 Safety Posters

This resource has been written for safety supervisors, team leads and other staff responsible for delivering safety training within the construction sector. There are three manuals which provide information, tools, tips and practice opportunities for delivering better safety training.

The Facilitator Guide and Participant Workbook can be used to deliver one or two 3-hour train-the-trainer workshops.

The Self-Directed Guide is useful for smaller organizations which may not have the capacity, time or training dollars to hire a workshop trainer.

Each of the manuals can be used in conjunction with the set of 50 Safety Posters depicting different safety topics.

This resource was developed to be used in organizations with workers whose first language is not English.

Facilitator Guide and Participant Workbook

These manuals aim to increase an organization's capacity to deliver more effective and engaging safety talks, and they work best when they are used together with the 50 Safety Posters.

To request a workshop, to download the PDF versions, or to order copies of the manuals, please visit the AWES website: www.awes.ca

Self-Directed Guide

This manual was written for smaller organizations as an independent study for staff interested in delivering more effective and engaging safety talks. It can be used with the 50 Safety Posters. To download the PDF version or to order copies of the manual and the safety posters, please visit the AWES website: www.awes.ca

50 Safety Posters

Fifty highly visual safety posters representing hot topics relevant to the construction industry were developed with plain language teaching points and tips on the back, to aid safety trainers. To download the PDF versions or to order copies of the safety posters, please visit the AWES website: www.awes.ca

Acknowledgments

Funding for the creation and piloting of this resource was generously provided by Alberta Employment and Immigration, now Alberta Human Services. By investing in this research, the funders have highlighted the pressing need to build capacity and develop resources to equip employers.

AWES would also like to acknowledge the Alberta Construction Safety Association (ACSA) for sharing resources, expertise and feedback; the Alberta Construction Association (ACA) for promoting the benefits of participating in the project to its membership; the Construction Sector Council (CSC) for agreeing to disseminate the project to industry; and finally, the companies who helped pilot the resource and provide feedback: DMT Mechanical, Altair, Picker People, and Scott Builders.

Project Manager: Cindy Messaros

Project Team:

Paul Holmes, Emil Tarka, Lorene Anderson, Barb Burfoot

© Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)

The material may be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for non-commercial purposes when the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society is appropriately acknowledged. The material may not be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for commercial purposes without written agreement from the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society.

For more information contact:

The Executive Director

Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)
www.awes.ca



www.awes.ca

Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a competent, adaptable and innovative workforce through workplace essential skills initiatives.

About this guide

The resource has been designed for organizations to take a self-directed approach to enhancing the presentation skills of those who give safety talks. Safety talks include weekly or monthly general safety meetings with all employees, as well toolbox talks and tailgate meetings with teams at the start of shifts.

Using the safety posters

The guide is accompanied by safety posters which are downloadable from the AWES website: awes.ca. They are designed to be user-friendly and cover a wide range of safety topics for the construction sector.

Learning goals

The goal of all safety training is to prevent accidents and injuries. Being a better communicator of safety is central to achieving that goal. Therefore, for those tasked with raising the safety skills of workers in the construction sector, this learning guide has three main learning goals:

- Strengthen your presentation skills through these learning resources and tools.
- Remove your presentation “blind spots” through real time feedback from colleagues.
- Advance the “culture of safety” in your workplace by enabling you to be a better communicator.

Approach

You can use this self-directed guide in two ways:

- Independently. Work through the resource by yourself. Ask one or two close colleagues to perform the formal evaluations of your safety talks, using the checklists at the back of this guide. Set up a time to get together to review their evaluations. Use the suggested feedback mechanism used throughout this resource, namely the “Keep – Stop – Start Doing” approach. It enables the evaluators to recognize your strengths (keep doing), while giving you constructive feedback on your gaps (stop and start doing).
- As a team. Work through the resource as a team that regularly gives safety talks. Collaborate to perform the formal evaluations of your safety talks, using the checklists at the back of this guide. Set up a time to get together to review the evaluations. Use the suggested feedback mechanism used throughout this resource, namely the “Keep – Stop – Start Doing” approach. It enables evaluators to recognize the person’s individual strengths (keep doing), while giving constructive feedback on gaps (stop and start doing).

Activities

| | |
|--|----|
| Step 1: Understand How Credibility is Built | 4 |
| Step 2: Set Your Goals | 6 |
| Step 3: Be Clear, Coherent and Concise | 7 |
| Step 4: Adjust Voice and Body Language | 12 |

Tools and Tip Sheets

| | |
|---|----|
| Tool 1 Safety Talk Skills Checklist | 15 |
| Tool 2 Body Language and Speech Quality Checklist | 16 |
| Tip Sheet 1 Giving Safety Talks | 17 |
| Tip Sheet 2 Learning Styles | 18 |
| Tip Sheet 3 Using Open-Ended Question | 19 |
| Tip Sheet 4 Using Closed-Ended Question | 20 |
| Tip Sheet 5 Dealing with Disruptions | 21 |
| Tip Sheet 6 Bridging Communication Gaps | 22 |
| Tip Sheet 7 Bridging Cultural Gaps | 23 |
| Tip Sheet 8 Building Cultural Intelligence | 24 |
| Tip Sheet 9 Creating Understanding | 25 |
| Answers to Activity 3 | 26 |

Step 1 Understand How Credibility is Built

Safety talks

Safety talks include weekly or monthly general safety meetings with all employees, as well toolbox talks and tailgate meetings with teams at the start of shifts. Regardless of where a safety talk happens, the speaker needs credibility to gain the trust and attention of his or her listeners. Credibility doesn't have a recipe. It varies between occupations, organizations and teams. However, credibility is a critical factor in ensuring that safety is transferred from the meeting to the workplace.

Building credibility

Credibility is the amount of respect and trust you have from co-workers, supervisors and clients. It is built in various ways depending on your job. Education and work experience are often the first lines of credibility. Sometimes life experience matters. In very hierarchical workplace cultures, seniority gives credibility. At other times, credibility can come from age, rapport, technical skills, or by appointment to a position. For a person giving safety talks, credibility depends on a mix of factors unique to your organization or team. However, good communication is the central quality for credibility in safety talks.

Activity

Read the list of qualities that build the credibility of a safety talk speaker. In the box, put a check mark (✓) next to the top five that you think are most critical for establishing credibility in your workplace context. At the end of the list, make a note of any additional qualities that are also essential to building the credibility of the speaker.

| | |
|--|--|
| Clarity – speaks clearly with clear purpose and clear word choices | |
| Coherence – speaks coherently (well-organized, key points and transitioning words e.g. first) | |
| Conciseness – speaks concisely, stays on topic and eliminates the unnecessary details | |
| Speech quality – uses good speed and volume with limited interjections, such as “um” “ah” | |
| Preparation – comes across as well-prepared | |
| Body language – uses good eye contact, facial expression etc. | |
| Rapport – connects with the audience to gain their trust and attention | |
| Expertise – knowledgeable and experienced in the safety content of the talk | |
| Other... | |



See **Tip Sheet 1**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on giving better safety talks.

Step 1 Understand How Credibility is Built

Meeting for peer evaluations

Your evaluators have not done the two formal evaluations of your presentation skills yet. Those will be done later, once you work through steps 2 to 4.

1. At this point, simply meet with your evaluator(s) to have a general discussion on giving safety talks.
2. Discuss the seven introductory aspects of a good safety talk, as listed below.
3. Ask them if they have any feedback for you at this point, even though they have not performed any of the evaluations. They may have general comments for you on your presentation skills, things you could start doing and keep doing.

| | | Keep doing | Start doing |
|----------------|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| Clarity | Clear purpose and clear word choices. | | |
| Coherence | Well-organized, key points and transitioning words e.g. First, next, finally. | | |
| Conciseness | Stays on topic and eliminates the unnecessary details. | | |
| Speech quality | Good speed, volume, limited interjections such as “um” “ah”. | | |
| Preparation | Well prepared. | | |
| Body language | Good use of gesture, space and eye contact to engage listeners. | | |
| Knowledge | Knowledgeable and experienced in the safety content of the talk. | | |
| Other | | | |

Step 2 Set Your Goals

You, your team and organization

Safety happens within a workplace culture. It should flow from the top down, from the bottom up, from the centre outwards and from the edges inwards. Your safety talks happen within a culture of safety that is either strong or weak, or moving in one of those directions. As you set goals, you should consider what is working and not working in terms of safety in your team and organization. As you improve your safety talks, your team and organization should become stronger with you.



Activity

Set your goals by answering the questions below.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| My team – Identify three practices your team should keep, stop and start doing in their general safety on the job. | | |
| “keep doing” e.g. enforcing safety and loss prevention | “stop doing” e.g. giving in on small infractions | “start doing” e.g. regular safety meetings |
| My organization – Identify three practices that your organization should keep, stop and start doing. | | |
| “keep doing” e.g. strong senior management support | “stop doing” e.g. going through the motions | “start doing” e.g. setting aside more time in safety meetings for questions and feedback |
| My goals – Using the list you generated above, set yourself goals for enhancing your presentation skills. Narrow your goals down to one to three immediate goals. Then, one short-term safety goal for your team (next 3 months). And finally, one longer-term goal for safety standards in your organization (next 6-12 months). Be clear and specific in your choice of words. | | |
| Immediate workshop goal | Short-term safety talk goal | Longer-term safety goal for organization |

Step 3 Be Clear, Concise and Coherent

The four stages

A safety talk is made up of at least four stages.

- Planning, which means putting down on paper what you need to communicate.
- Opening, which is the first few minutes of the safety talk to cover introductions and general housekeeping items.
- Delivering the core content, which is the main body of the safety talk.
- Closing with a short review of the main point(s) and application.

Activity 1

Below, in the right-hand column, are things that are important to include in most safety talks. Match the items in the list with one of the four stages in the left column. The first four have been done for you. You can find the answers for the rest, on the next two pages.



See **Tip Sheet 7**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on bridging cultural gaps to build rapport with your teams.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Planning Know your topic.</p> | <p>Know your topic.</p> <p>Give a quick outline of your talk – introduce topic and key points.</p> <p>Speak clearly, coherently and concisely.</p> |
| <p>Opening Give a quick outline.</p> | <p>Give a strong conclusion – you want high transference of your main point into the workplace.</p> <p>Prepare your outline – clear, coherent, concise.</p> <p>Anticipate and prep for questions.</p> |
| <p>Delivery Use transition words.</p> | <p>Connect with your audience e..g humour, story, interesting fact or update.</p> <p>Do the housekeeping – review last meet, incidents, concerns etc.</p> <p>Open the floor – ask for feedback, comments etc.</p> |
| <p>Closing Give a strong conclusion.</p> | <p>Identify target audience.</p> <p>Prep your visuals and handouts.</p> <p>Add personal stories and statistics or facts.</p> |

Step 3 Be Clear, Concise and Coherent

See **Tip Sheet 2**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on understanding the learning styles of your audience.

The tables below provide brief explanations to each of the items in the list from the previous table.

| Planning | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Know your topic | Do your homework. If you are unclear about a topic from the safety posters, go online and do further research. This is a good time to get some statistics from the Occupational Health and Safety sites to support your talk. It is also a good time to select a safety story from your own experiences, or search out a story through co-workers or online to support your safety topic. |
| Identify target audience | Are you having a tailgate meeting, a toolbox meeting or a general safety meeting? The formality and length of the meeting will vary, depending on the type of meeting. Some people learn through statistics, others through a personal story. Sometimes you need to get someone up to demonstrate a point. Will you need to deal with complaining and whining? Don't be too bossy, but be decisive and reasonable. Empathize, don't criticize. Speak to where they are at. |
| Prepare your outline | Be clear – choose the simplest words and concepts; limit complexity whenever possible. Be coherent – organize your ideas into specific points; start with the main point such as what you want people to know or do at the end of the talk; then transition clearly from one point to the next, using markers like “first”, “next” etc. Be concise – keep it short; get to the point quickly; eliminate the unnecessary; stick to the time limit. |
| Anticipate questions | Think about those parts of the talk that people might question or challenge. You may need to clarify or justify anything new, surprising or controversial, or any negative news. The meeting might include people with low English skills. You should have a few open-ended questions to ask, on your key safety points, to check their comprehension. |
| Prep visuals and handouts | Use the safety posters that accompany this guide. They are freely downloadable from the AWES website (www.awes.ca) and easy to use. Remember that visuals – outlines, pictures, PowerPoint, memos – increase an audience's interest, focus, understanding and memory. Create a paper or a digital outline of your safety talk with the key points for easy reference during the talk. This is especially useful if you get sidetracked. This is a must for team members with low English. Put the safety talk outline up on the staff notice board as a memo. |

Step 3 Be Clear, Concise and Coherent

| Opening | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Do the housekeeping | Take care of any housekeeping items such as a review of the last meeting, discuss recent safety incidents, accidents or near misses, go over any concerns. |
| Give a quick outline | Give your listeners a quick overview of what you are going to talk about such as your title or topic, your main points, what they have to know or do once they get back on the job. |
| Connect with your audience | Make a joke. Tell a quick story. Wish someone a happy birthday. Get someone to demonstrate something. Engage your listeners. Bring them in. Turn the attention to them. |

Speaking to non-native speakers of English is a skill. You have to adapt your communication, even in safety meetings. See **Tip Sheet 6**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on closing communication gaps.

| Delivery | |
|---|---|
| Speak clearly, coherently and concisely | Keep the safety talk simple. Stick to the key points of your outline. Make sure you use transition words as you move from one point to the next, such as first, then, following this. |
| Add personal stories and facts | Use the stories from your own life or others, or invite the audience to give examples. Get people up to demonstrate. Interact with the team. |

Building rapport across culturally-diverse teams is key to establishing trust among the members. Trust is essential to safety. See **Tip Sheet 8**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on building cultural intelligence in yourself and your teams.

| Closing | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Give a strong conclusion | The conclusion gives you one more chance to emphasize your main point(s). What does the audience need to know or do once they are back on the job? This is where you want to create accountability, high transference from the talk to the workplace, or get input from people on application of knowledge. Even though many safety talks are more reminders than new learning, you still want to foster a measure of mutual accountability among a team. |
| Open the floor | Invite questions. You may want to ask clarifying questions with workers who have low English levels. Let people know where they can get a copy of the safety talk as a memo or other handouts. |

You often need to make sure everyone understands what you said in the talk. See **Tip Sheets 3, 4 and 9**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on asking questions and getting clarification.

Step 3 Be Clear, Concise and Coherent

Activity 2

3-30-3 Outline

The 3-30-3 Outline is a easy-to-use strategy to plan your presentation. It makes it quick and to the point. The 3-30-3 Outline asks three questions:

- If I had only 3 seconds to speak, what would I say?
- If I had another 30 seconds, what points best support that main point?
- If I had an extra 3 minutes, how would I expand each point?

3-30-3 is a communication habit – a way of organizing information – so that the information is always clear (in plain language), concise (to the point) and coherent (logically ordered). When you answer the three questions during planning, you create a framework to “hang” your safety information on. In fact, it is a good framework to use when you have to give updates or impromptu talks. Take a look at the explanation beneath each question.

3-30-3 Framework

| 3 | 30 | 3 |
|---|--|--|
| If I had only 3 seconds to speak, what would I say? | If I had another 30 seconds, what points best support that main point? | If I had an extra 3 minutes, how would I expand each point? |
| <p>Main point</p> <p>The answer becomes the main point of your safety talk. This question, under such short time, focuses everything to the core message. You could also ask it this way: what does my audience need to know and/ or do, once the talk is over? It makes your purpose clear.</p> | <p>Supporting points</p> <p>The answers give the supporting points to your main point. If you break it down to 3 points, you would have 10 seconds to state each point. Clearly ordered supporting points make your talk coherent – arranged logically instead of muddled up.</p> | <p>Body</p> <p>This is the “how”. This question helps set out the body, or core content, of your safety talk. It gives you 60 seconds to expand on each of your 3 supporting points. During a real time safety talk, you would naturally extend or limit the time, and fill your content with examples, visuals, demonstrations, stories etc. By limiting your time in the planning stage, you can eliminate the unnecessary details, which makes your talk concise, or to-the-point.</p> |

Step 3 Be Clear, Concise and Coherent

Activity 3

The following five sentences form the working outline for a safety talk on the topic of WHMIS labels. Put each sentence into the box that best matches its position in a safety talk. Write only the number down. After you have ordered them, underline the transition words that shift from one idea to the next. There are at least eight transition words and/or phrases. The answers are in the back of this resource.

Outline for WHMIS label safety talk

1. And just as important, you, the worker, are responsible for two critical activities. First, make sure you understand the information on the WHMIS label. That means reviewing the MSDS sheets when necessary. And second, report to me or another supervisor when a label is unreadable or has been removed or defaced. It is not just your safety but also the person working with you that matters.
2. I would like to revisit WHMIS labels in this safety talk, with the main point of making sure you know exactly what you are accountable for as the worker.
3. To start, and simply put, suppliers have to obtain, apply and update the labels to their containers. That is their job.
4. As the employer, we need to ensure all containers of controlled products that enter this workplace are labelled properly. That means obtaining supplier labels when there are none or creating workplace labels as required.
5. First, we will do a quick review of the supplier’s responsibilities. Then, the labeling responsibilities of the management team here, meaning your employer. That will make it clear to finally look at your two main responsibilities as a worker on this team.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Main point: # _____ | | |
| Supporting point: # _____ | | |
| Body: Supporting point 1 # _____ | Body: Supporting point 2 # _____ | Body: Supporting point 3 # _____ |

Peer evaluation 1

The focus is on your safety talk skills. Give your evaluator(s) Tool 1: Safety Talk Skills Checklist at the back of this guide. Have the evaluator(s) observe you giving your next safety talk. Have a meeting after to debrief, to make notes on feedback and to ask questions

Step 4 Adjust Voice and Body Language

Non-verbals

Voice and body language, or non-verbal communication, make up for over 90 percent of all communication. Most people are unaware of their own non-verbal habits that occur while giving a safety talk. The more you are aware of what you do subconsciously, the more you can make a conscious effort to either change or maximize those habits.



Activity

Read through the body language and speech quality tables.
Which ones are you good at and which ones do you want to develop?

See **Tip Sheet 5**, at the back of the guide for useful tips on dealing with disruptions.

| Body language | |
|--|--|
| <p>Eyes Make eye contact with everyone across the audience. Avoid focusing on one person or staring down at the floor.</p> | <p>Expression Keep your facial expression confident, friendly and open, but focused by staying on task and on time.</p> |
| <p>Gesture Use arms and hands to strengthen and support your words and ideas. Avoid low gesture which is passive, and high gesture that is distracting.</p> | <p>Spatial command Stand up straight, be relaxed. Appear calm and collected. Avoid fidgeting or slouching.</p> |

| Speech quality | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Speed Speak at a moderate speed so that listeners can process ideas.</p> | <p>Rhythm Vary your voice pitch with high and low inflections by stressing key words in a sentence.</p> | <p>Interjections Limit interjections such as sighs, um, ah, like etc.</p> |
| <p>Pause Use well-placed pauses to chunk information into thought groups. It is easier to process in the brain.</p> | <p>Tone Mood is set through tone – the words you select and the emotion in your voice. Create a positive, open and optimistic mood.</p> | <p>Repetition Avoid unnecessary repetition of words, phrases and sentences unless to emphasize or remind.</p> |
| <p>Volume Speak loud enough for everyone to hear clearly.</p> | <p>Clarity Pronounce your words clearly by moderating your speaking speed.</p> | <p>Compensation strategies If you go blank, or get stuck, just pause. Think. Look at your notes. Give the group a quick task. Tell a story. But limit your interjections and repetition. It happens to everyone. Relax.</p> |

Step 4 Adjust Voice and Body Language

What is plain language?

Plain language is the skill of adjusting your oral and written communication to fit the audience it is being delivered to. Rather than over-simplifying and losing the original meaning in your message, plain language should make the message clearer through careful word choices and sentence structures. By doing this, everyone understands the information and expectations better, especially in safety talks.

In plain language, speakers will:

- use concrete and familiar words
- explain new terms and occupational jargon
- organize ideas in a logical order

Not every word or sentence can be put into plain language. Use your discretion – some terms and concepts defy rewriting. In these situations, better visuals, definitions or even language translation could be used to support understanding.

Ultimately, plain language contributes significantly to a safer and more inclusive team culture.

When to use plain language?

Speaking and writing with plain language is crucial in low literacy or low English-speaking contexts. It is useful for both written and oral public communications, from safety talks to safety bulletins, memos, instructions and procedures. Where could plain language be applied more effectively in your organization?

Step 4 Adjust Voice and Body Language

Activity

The column on the right is a short review of the OHS rights of workers. Use the space in the right column to rewrite them into plain language.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>The rights and obligations of workers go hand-in-hand. As a worker, the OHS law requires you to work safely and co-operate with your employer by adhering to the health and safety rules for the job. As an employee, you also have OHS rights, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. to receive adequate training prior to performing and executing tasks that require specific industry training.2. to refuse imminently dangerous and hazardous work.3. to participate in all of your employers worksite hazard identification processes and be involved in the control and elimination of the identified hazards. You can exercise this right by completing your hazard assessment card prior to commencing your tasks. | <p>The rights and obligations of workers go together. As a worker, you have rights, but you also have obligations to your employer. OHS law says you must work together with your employer to follow the health and safety rules for your job. You also have OHS rights, such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3. |
|---|--|

Peer evaluation 2

The focus is on your body language and speech quality. Provide your evaluator(s) with Tool 2: Body Language and Speech Quality Checklist at the back of this guide. Have the evaluator(s) observe you for the final time giving a safety talk. Have a meeting after to debrief, to make notes on feedback and to ask questions.

Safety Talk Skills Checklist

Tool 1

| Opening | Keep doing | Start doing | Additional comments |
|---|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Introductions – does necessary introductions | | | |
| Topic – gives title or topic of the safety talk | | | |
| Main point – frontloads main point clearly | | | |
| Accountability – connects the main point with the group | | | |
| Outline – sets out the supporting points | | | |
| Rapport – connects with the audience | | | |

| Delivery | Keep doing | Start doing | Additional comments |
|---|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Personalizes – uses life experience to explain points | | | |
| Demonstrates – uses actions or activities to explain points | | | |
| Repeats – repeats key points, terms and concepts | | | |
| Participates – involves group during the talk | | | |
| Transitions – uses markers to transition between ideas | | | |
| Imparts confidence – avoids self-deprecation | | | |
| Speaks clearly | | | |
| Speaks concisely | | | |
| Speaks coherently | | | |
| Respects – respects audience's time | | | |

| Closing | Keep doing | Start doing | Additional comments |
|--|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Summary – restates the main point | | | |
| Accountability – restates the application into the workplace | | | |

Body Language and Speech Quality Checklist

Tool 2

| Body language | Keep doing | Start doing | Additional comments |
|--|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Eyes – makes eye contact across the audience | | | |
| Gesture – strengthens and supports speaking | | | |
| Expression – confident, friendly, focused and open | | | |
| Spatial command – relaxed, calm, collected | | | |
| Other... | | | |

| Speech quality | Keep doing | Start doing | Additional comments |
|---|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Speed – speaks at a moderate speed | | | |
| Pause – uses well-placed pauses | | | |
| Volume – speaks loud enough for everyone to hear | | | |
| Rhythm – varies speech pitch with inflection and intonation | | | |
| Tone – creates a positive, open and optimistic mood | | | |
| Clarity – pronounces words clearly | | | |
| Interjections – limits interjections (like, sighs, um, ah) | | | |
| Repetitions – avoids unnecessary repetitions | | | |
| Compensation strategies – uses effective strategies | | | |
| Other... | | | |

Giving Safety Talks

Tip Sheet 1

The aim

Becoming a slick public speaker is not the goal; instead aim to advance a culture of safety at work. Aim for engaging talks that get high transference of safety from the safety meeting into the workplace.

The approach

Give clear, concise and coherent safety messages. Eliminate the unnecessary. That means simple language. To the point. And logically organized.

The focus

Eliminate the unnecessary – build your talk around what the audience needs to know and/or do.

Get feedback

Use the “keep-stop-start” method to regularly seek direct feedback from colleagues. Use their feedback to further improve your skills.

Transition clearly

Use clear transition words such as first, next, lastly, to move from one point to the next. Also, repeat key words, terms and concepts.

Less is more

Less is more. Don’t try to pack too much into a safety talk. Instead focus on a few specific points and aim for high transference of knowledge into the workplace.

Eliminate stage fright

You can control stage fright because it is rooted in the following non-reality: “Someone else can deliver exactly the same safety talk better than you, and score a 10 out of 10. No mistakes. No slips ups.” We know there is no such person. No one is a 10. Every speaker walks away doing it better the next time. Your cure for stage fright maybe unique, but you can start with the following:

- Prep well. Practice the talk out loud beforehand. It will boost your confidence when you stand before the audience.
- Recognize it but don’t feed it. Stage fright feels real but can be controlled. Put yourself mentally ahead 5 minutes in your talk. The first few minutes of a talk can be tough as you are trying to find your “groove,” or natural flow of thought. Once you are past those first few minutes, you find your flow.
- Be realistic. There are no perfect 10s. Stop thinking “me” and focus your thoughts on “them,” the audience. You are giving the safety talk to guide and enable them to not get hurt or hurt others. It is not about you.
- Many ways, many talks. There is no one way to give a talk. Yours is one way. Focus on figuring out the best way in that moment with that audience. It will likely be done differently next time.
- Build your credibility in your own mind so that you feel “qualified” to speak.
- Use notes. Have an outline on paper that you can turn to if you lose focus.
- Seek feedback. Be open to improving by getting feedback from trusted co-workers.

Build rapport

People don’t really care how much you know until they know how much you care. Care has to do with how much you actually care about your topic, your work and the people.

A safety talk begins days and months before you stand in front of people. The credibility you have with your audience comes from how you model what you want them to practice. It is not just what you practice, but how you practice it with them daily. And at a deeper more effective level, do you know the people?

It was said that the reason people followed a mad man like Napoleon is because he knew the first names of more than a thousand of his soldiers at any time. Building rapport is just as vital as building credibility.

Recognizing Learning Style

Tip Sheet 2

These are the three most recognized learning styles. Although everyone has a preference for one, the best learning occurs when we engage people using more than one style. Use all three styles in your safety talks.

| Learning style | Definition | Ways to engage |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Auditory | Learn best by hearing. Auditory learners often talk aloud to process information. They can be easily distracted. They have difficulty with written instructions, preferring to talk through the steps. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read aloud. • Repeat key points. • Make time for open or group discussions. • Get them to repeat back to you. • Use personal stories. |
| Visual | Learn best by seeing. Visual learners observe first rather than act or talk. They are organized in their approach to tasks. Their mind may stray during verbal discussions. They find verbal instructions difficult, preferring to see it on paper or in a drawing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide handouts, memos, pictures. • Use PowerPoint for formal meetings, with large font and lots of white space. • Be colour-coded and be strategic with various fonts and sizes. • Allow time for note-taking. • Demonstrate the point in front of them. |
| Kinesthetic | Learn best by touching, doing and moving. Kinesthetic learners like to solve learning problems by physically working through them. They will try new things are outgoing by nature. They are tactile, preferring to touch objects and people as they engage them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get them to physically demonstrate it, touch the object, engage the point in some physical way. |

Using Open-Ended Questions

Tip Sheet 3

Open-ended questions ask for experience, opinion, reflection and application. They cannot be answered in one word. They encourage more information and deeper thought from your audience. Use the following examples as needed.

| Purpose | Examples |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Draw on experience | How have you used these tools? |
| Give opinion | What has your experience been in trying this _____ ? |
| Predict outcomes and consequences | What would happen if we _____ ? What could happen if we don't _____ ? What if all new employees were required to _____ ? |
| Make comparisons | How is this the same as _____ ? |
| Find alternatives | Are there any alternatives to come up with the same result? |
| Challenge thinking | Do you agree with _____ and why or why not? |
| Place value, priority, importance | How do you feel about _____ ? |
| State relationships | Why are these two things connected? |
| Bring understanding | Why do you think the company is asking the people to _____ ? |
| Demonstrate understanding | Show me how you properly attach _____ ? |
| Explore motivation | What is the rationale behind the _____ policy? |
| Apply | Would you use this procedure at home? |
| Make evaluations | How has this machine improved? |
| Confirm | How do you know that is working? |

Using Closed-Ended Questions

Tip Sheet 4

Closed-ended questions focus on factual information. There is often a right or wrong, yes or no answer. They require short responses. Use the following examples as needed.

| Purpose | Examples |
|-----------------------|--|
| Recalling information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you summarize main points? • Who is the procedure written for? • Do you wear this in your daily work? • What hazards are there on this job site? |
| Identification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some possible outcomes of this disease? • Where does this happen at your workstation? • What are the right conditions for this to happen? • When would you use this safety device? |
| Classification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where or what group does this chemical belong to? |
| Definition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the proper way to wear this PPE? • What is the proper procedure for hazard identification? |
| Symptoms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has happened when proper ergonomics are not followed? • What are the hazards with not keeping your eye on the weather? |

Dealing with Disruptions

Tip Sheet 5

Here is a list of common disruptive behaviours you might experience with an audience, and tips for dealing with the behaviours. Refer to them as needed.

| Distraction | Definition | Strategy |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Disinterest | The person seems bored, yawning loudly, looking at their watch. You should deal with disinterest or it may affect other audience members. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move closer. Standing close to the person will focus their attention. • Ask the person a question that engages and brings him or her into the safety talk. |
| Sarcasm | The audience member makes sarcastic jokes. You need to deal with sarcasm or your audience will lose respect for you. | Confront the individual directly. This person has an issue that needs to be addressed. Ask, “What do you mean by that?” Encourage him or her to state the concerns so that you can deal with them before moving on. |
| Arguing | The individual confronts you in front of the group, disputing your points. You need to deal with argumentative approach otherwise the group may join in. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appear relaxed. If you appear angry or unsure of yourself, the audience will lose trust in you. • Calmly respond to the individual’s comment. If the individual wishes to continue the discussion, invite them to discuss it with you in private after the talk. |
| Dominating | The person speaks a lot during your safety talk, frequently offering their comments and opinions. Dominators speak so much that no one else is able to contribute to your presentation. This annoys the rest of the audience and could cause them to stop paying attention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask closed questions to the dominator. This satisfies their need to contribute but forces them to give a short answer. • Ask questions to other audience members. This encourages them to contribute and takes the focus away from the dominator. • Politely ask “Can we hear what others think about this?” • Explain that, while you appreciate their contribution, you would like them to allow others to speak. Be respectful. |
| Side conversations | Audience members engage in a private conversation while you are making your presentation. This creates a distraction for the others in the audience and encourages more side conversations. | <p>For related side conversations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They may be translating or getting clarification; use the opportunity to raise the question to the group in case others also need translation or clarification. <p>For unrelated side conversations, do one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand closer. They will likely stop. • Pause. Continue once they have stopped talking. • Ask if they have a question or comment for the group. • Respectfully ask them to stop, and explain that their behaviour is a distraction to the others. |
| Cell phones | People take cell phone calls during the safety talk. | Don’t compromise on this. Ask people to turn off their cell phones. Getting safety right must take priority. Business or personal matters can wait until after the meeting. |
| Latecomers | The persons have a habit of arriving late for safety meetings. | Bring the latecomer up to the front, and build them into the safety talk by having him or her demonstrate the safety point, or tell a related safety story. |

Bridging Communication Gaps

Tip Sheet 6

Use plain English

Use simple word choices and whenever possible avoid idioms, slang, occupational jargon, expletives, colloquialisms, and complex humour like sarcasm.

Speak slowly, not loudly

Pause briefly between your thought groups in each sentence, like news anchors do on TV. It is easier for listeners to process what you say.

Use marker words

Separate your ideas with words like ‘first’, ‘then’, ‘next’, ‘after that’, ‘at the end’ etc. It becomes easier to connect your ideas.

Repeat key words

Be aware of your key words and ideas so that you can repeat them. This reinforces the listener’s understanding.

Be linear

Begin with the end. What do I want the person to know or do at the end of the conversation? Organize your thoughts before you speak so that you are clear, specific, and to the point.

Use gestures and visuals

Gestures can support basic ideas. Drawings and other visuals can explain more complex details. Write it down if necessary.

Listen actively

Pay attention. Show that you are listening. Allow the person to finish. Provide feedback. If pronunciation challenges make it difficult to understand, try mentally repeating the person’s words as they speak. Confirm what you did understand. Then ask the person to repeat slowly what you didn’t understand.

Use a translator as a last option

Take the time to use English at work. Only use a translator when absolutely necessary. It is worthwhile to make it a habit of putting English first. Unless customers or safety issues are involved, the daily patience of using English, and not giving up, will be worthwhile in the future.

Encourage others

Create a culture of encouragement on teams so that people are not worried about ‘losing face’ if their English is incorrect. Encourage co-workers when their communication improves or when you see them trying to use English. Give constructive feedback to help them grow. Encouragement builds confidence in newcomers.

Bridging Cultural Gaps

Tip Sheet 7

Ask open-ended questions

“Losing face”, due to not understanding, may worry some newcomers. Therefore, avoid using yes and no answer-questions. For example, instead of saying “Do you understand?” ask “What are you going to do first?” or “What are the three things we need to get done?”

Adapt to different communication styles

Culture can influence communication, such as the degree of directness, or the amount of emotion and personal disclosure etc. Sometimes this good for a team, and at other times it can stop people from working well together. Training may be necessary to develop better communication skills on teams.

Look for indirect communication

Because people may not want to offend or “lose face”, they may communicate indirectly. You might need to “read between the lines”, or understand the hidden meanings in body language such as smiles, sighs, or even laughs. Ask. Be curious.

Be aware of personal space

Culture, religion and gender can significantly influence norms of personal space and touch. Ask newcomers about their understandings of space, touch. Ask them about their previous workplace cultures. For the most part, newcomers are eager to talk about their cultures and previous workplaces.

Recognize different internal clocks

Culture wires the “internal clocks” of people differently. This might affect communication, deadlines and punctuality, multi-tasking etc. Even religious practices and community commitments can set the rhythms of work. Ask newcomers about their ideas of time in the workplace. Compare your Canadian company norms with their cultural backgrounds to raise everyone’s awareness of differences. Get to know newcomers so that you can talk about issues. Stay curious.

Understand how hierarchy affects behaviour

People from more hierarchical work cultures might act differently with supervisors. For example, they may not show lots of initiative – always waiting to be told what to do. In a leadership role, they might seem “bossy”. Compare and contrast the leader-subordinate relationship in their culture with your own workplace. Discuss how trust, credibility, rapport and respect are built in your workplace.

Notice how credibility is built

Credibility affects trust and respect. It might be built through work accomplishments or personal character, by education, leadership positions and important responsibilities, family and influential people, money and possessions, age etc. How is credibility built on your team? Brainstorm with your team. Start a discussion at lunch.

Notice how rapport is developed

Become more aware of how people build relationship at work, of how much personal information they share and the things they talk about. Bring newcomers into conversations. Explain sports and other popular culture. Be curious about other cultures. Chat. Ask. Find out. Share what you learn with others on your team.

Build trust, not silence

Get to know newcomers. Help them find that “fit” at work. Look for the right timing to talk and offer advice. You have lived here from the beginning – you have “lessons learned” to offer them. They, in turn, can expand your worldview more than a TV show ever could. Do as they say at National Geographic, “Live curious.”

Building Cultural Intelligence

Tip Sheet 8

Stay curious

At National Geographic they say “Live curious.” Cultural curiosity can go beyond noticing different physical traits, forms of dress, food or rituals.

You can ask people about books, sports, music and raising kids. You can ask about growing up in another part of the world. Best memories. The role of parents and grandparents.

You can get into even more interesting discussions about relations on teams and with supervisors, what can and should not be talked about, how time is best used at work. How respect is shown in another language. How credibility and rapport are built at work. The conversation starters are endless.

When you make deposits of respectful curiosity into others, you build up trust, the most powerful resource on a team. Stay curious.

Suspend judgment

Have you ever had a cultural experience that was uncomfortable? You are not the first person. But you might be the first on your team to suspend judgment.

Suspending judgement means taking hold of your feelings, or emotions. Don't judge the situation as right or wrong, or even unimportant. It is like getting a rude email and waiting until the next day when you can think calmly about the right response.

In a difficult cultural moment, try to think about what the person's motivations might be. It is probably not meant to be rude or difficult. What you find is that human motivations are similar, but the way they come out can be very different.

A gentle response and a curious approach will get better reactions. Suspending judgement works.

Become mindful

Cultural intelligence means seeing both differences and similarities between people. What you should avoid is minimizing those differences, or over-emphasizing similarities.

Minimizing simply puts your own cultural norms onto others, because you think everyone is the same. Cultural norms are not universal. Even neighbours like the US and Canada differ in workplace cultures. In fact, culture hides itself best from its own followers.

Be mindful. Deepen your understanding of your own cultural norms. Go beyond the surface of things like dress, foods and sports to how you communicate, build credibility or make friends. Become mindful.

Be adaptive

Follow the golden rule: “do to other cultures as they would prefer.” This implies increasing your general and specific knowledge of the other cultures you work with. Even if it is a simple thing like adapting your eye contact or personal space, or a little more complex like adjusting your communication style. Why? Good relations. Less conflict. Better use of your time. Increased safety. Job quality. Respect and trust.

At the same time, if you recognize specific workplace norms need to be clearly shared with newcomers, don't keep silent. Draw on the trust you build with them and be open about differences.

Work to have a clear and common agreement on what behaviours and attitudes work best between you and your co-workers. Be adaptive too.

Creating Understanding with non-native speakers of English

Tip Sheet 9

What to do when a newcomer doesn't understand you

If a newcomer doesn't understand your spoken message, use the following guidelines:

- Front load your message – put the most important point first by focusing only on what you want the person to do or know.
- Make sure you are using plain language, and avoid slang, colloquialisms and idiomatic phrases.
- Speak slower not louder. Pause between ideas. Use marker words.
- Ask the person what they did understand, and then what they didn't understand.
- Re-explain the difficult part, keep it simple but don't lose the key meaning of your message.
- Write the most important points down in sequence.
- Use gestures and visuals if necessary.
- Use a translator, if nothing else works.
- Always confirm the person's understanding with open-ended questions, such as "What should we do first?"

How to check a newcomer has understood you clearly

If you know a newcomer usually finds it difficult to understand you, use the following guidelines:

- Before you start, invite the person to ask questions at any time they don't understand.
- Tell the person you are going to stop sometimes and ask him or her to repeat back or to answer a question. Tell the person that you would like him or her to ask questions at those moments as well.
- If in doubt, always check the person has understood by asking open-ended questions. Avoid "yes" and "no" answer questions. Instead, ask the person to explain what they are going to do, or get him or her to show you.
- Later, ask follow-up questions on details, such as safety related concerns, to check their understanding and progress.
- Watch for body language and indirect signals, such as smiles and laughs or head movements, that suggest the person is not understanding.
- Think of what you have not mentioned that you assume the newcomer knows.
- Write it down, or support yourself with gestures and visuals, or use a translator if nothing else works.
- Ask the person to give you an update at a specific time soon afterwards to avoid going too far in their work with a mistake.

Answers to Activity 3

Outline for WHMIS label safety talk

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Main point: # <u>2</u> | | |
| Supporting point: # <u>5</u> | | |
| Body: Supporting point 1 # <u>3</u> | Body: Supporting point 2 # <u>4</u> | Body: Supporting point 3 # <u>1</u> |

Transition words

- I would like to revisit WHMIS labels in this safety talk, with the main point of making sure you know exactly what you are accountable for as the worker.
- First, we will do a quick review of the supplier's responsibilities. Then, the labeling responsibilities of the management team here, meaning your employer. That will make it clear to finally look at your two main responsibilities as a worker on this team.
- To start, and simply put, suppliers have to obtain, apply and update the labels to their containers. That is their job.
- As the employer, we need to ensure all containers of controlled products that enter this workplace are labelled properly. That means obtaining supplier labels when there are none or creating workplace labels as required.
- And just as important, you, the worker are responsible for two critical activities. First, make sure you understand the information on the WHMIS label. That means reviewing the MSDS sheets when necessary. And second, report to me or another supervisor when a label is unreadable or has been removed or defaced. It is not just your safety but also the person working with you that matters.



www.awes.ca

Government of Alberta ■



CONSTRUCTION
SECTOR COUNCIL



CONSEIL SECTORIEL
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

