



095: Unsafe Acts

Key concepts

Groups that focus on eliminating unsafe acts consistently have better safety records than groups that focus on eliminating unsafe conditions.

Even in the safest of conditions, an unsafe act can lead to tragedy.

Even in situations where unsafe conditions exist, workers who approach their tasks with the goal of eliminating unsafe acts usually remain safe.

You cannot control your environment or others around you, but you can control your own actions.

Some of your actions may involve stopping work until unsafe conditions are corrected, or asking others to stop their work to consider what unsafe act or acts they are engaging in and if they can think of a safer approach.

Understand that taking a safety shortcut to “save time” is not what management wants. You do not save time or money when an injury occurs.

If you are a qualified employee who is properly doing the work you are trained to do, it is not your fault if the work isn’t meeting someone’s schedule. Don’t risk your safety in the mistaken idea your job depends on taking such a risk or that you will be rewarded for doing so.

You can save time by working smarter. You risk losing enormous amounts of time, or even your life, by working foolishly.

Examples of unsafe acts

- Arc welding with no shields.
- Not wearing safety glasses.
- Stringing a portable cord loosely across a walkway.
- Standing on the top rung of a stepladder.

When entering the work area

- Stop.
- Look for unsafe conditions or unsafe acts in progress.
- Smell for fumes, vapors, or smoke.
- Listen for alarms. Also, listen for leaks—especially if there is process steam—or mechanical sounds that indicate danger.

Replacing unsafe acts with safe work practices

Look at the situation. What tools, materials, equipment, procedures, assistance, and PPE are appropriate for doing the job?

For PPE, think in terms of zones. Systematically assess the danger to each body zone so you get the right PPE: head, eyes, ears, nose/mouth/lungs, torso, arms, hands, legs, feet.

Ensure the tools and equipment you use are serviceable.

Ask “what if” questions. What if I crawl in there and pass out from a gas? What if I step up there and slip? What if that part is energized?

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Take a “safety tour,” looking for unsafe acts. If you see one, ask the workers to stop what they are doing. Ask them if they can think of a safer way to do the job they are doing. When you see a dangerous job being done safely, think of how it might be done unsafely. Take notes and share them during the discussion.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Eliminating the number one cause of worker injury: unsafe acts.

Discussion notes :

Review and Discussion

What is the number one cause of worker injury?

What is misleading about safe conditions?

What are some actions you may take in response to unsafe conditions or the unsafe acts of others?

Does management want you to endanger yourself if doing so might mean the difference between timely completion and late completion of a job? Why do you think this is true or untrue?

If you are a qualified employee doing your job properly, what does that mean in regard to whether you are working fast enough?

What is the difference between working smarter and working foolishly?

What are some examples of unsafe acts, other than those already mentioned?

What should you do when entering a work area?

How should you assess the safety requirements for a job?

What is the significance of asking “what if” questions, and how might you apply this concept to a job where you are replacing a 75 KVA dry-type transformer?

Think through the job. What are the possible dangers? What steps can eliminate or reduce those dangers?

Look for what can change. Will gravel under the ladder allow it to shift? Can someone else energize this circuit if I don't lock it out? The answer to both questions is yes.

Look for typical hazards by type. For example, falling hazards: is there a danger of slipping, falling, or objects falling onto you?

Look for dumb things you might do, and take precautionary steps. For example, “If I’m working in that panel, I might forget and lean against that exposed busbar, so I should cover it with a rubber blanket.”

Participant's Signature and Date

[illegible]