

Toolbox Talks 2

045: Unsafe Acts: Construction Sites

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Think of some dangerous acts you have seen on construction sites, and be prepared to use them as examples.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Most injuries occur not due to unsafe conditions, but due to unsafe acts. This Safety Talk addresses unsafe acts on construction sites.

Discussion notes:

Background

Construction sites present their own set of dangers, in addition to those from pure electrical work and separate from those of operational sites.

Some unsafe acts on construction sites

- Walking from the gate to your work location without your hardhat and safety glasses on. Many dangers are present whether it's time to start work or not.
- Letting someone else in with your security badge. Many people don't see this as a safety violation. But the obvious question is this. What is an unauthorized person is doing trying to sneak onto the site?
- Walking under cranes, or walking behind, or in the path of, heavy equipment. This puts you directly in the path of danger. Loads can drop, operators can't see you.
- Failing to coordinate with other trades. Generally, your foreman or the project manager will take care of coordination. But communication problems do arise, things change, and details get overlooked. Before you energize that panel you just installed, for example, check the area for other people and let them know to stand clear.
- Taking breaks or lunch in undesignated areas. Take breaks and lunch in designated areas, only. Undesignated areas may have airborne (or other) hazards. Never take breaks around energized transformers or panels. In the event of an arc blast, you don't want to be there.
- Operating equipment that you aren't authorized to operate. You probably don't know the history or condition of that equipment or if it's actually safe to use.
- Letting other trades or crews use your equipment. This is especially a concern with conduit benders. A mismatch between shoe type and material can result in a dangerously damaged shoe.
- Building shacks or tents out of scrap materials. This is a problem on large sites with extended construction times. These structures introduce many safety problems. This is often compounded by the use of kerosene heaters. In addition to the fire hazard, using those heaters in a poorly ventilated space produces a toxicity hazard.
- Abusing the PA system. In the early stages of a site, the PA system is a favorite toy of practical jokers before it's turned over to the customer and secured. When people become annoyed with the PA system and tune it out, they will miss life-saving emergency announcements. Besides, it's distracting—which is also unsafe.

Review and discussion

1. Why should you wear your hard hat and safety glasses as soon as you come through the gate?
2. If a construction site is small and you know who is on site and what they

are doing, is it OK to leave your hard hat and safety glasses off until starting time? *[Note to presenter: This kind of familiarity provides a false sense of security. We really don't know for sure that Brad the brick mason isn't going to start up a grinder or accidentally kick a loose brick down on us while walking down his project a bit early that day.]*

3. If someone seems trustworthy, then it's OK to let that person through a gate or security door with your badge or key, right? Why or why not?

4. Where should you position yourself in relation to heavy equipment, cranes, hoists, and overhead platforms? Why?

5. What are some activities that you should coordinate with other trades in your work area? Why isn't this strictly your foreman's job or the project manager's job? To what degree do you do this? If you discover something major wasn't even addressed to the other trades, should you just handle that yourself? *[Note to presenter: The foreman should handle coordination issues with other trades. Sometimes, that may require going to the other foreman or to the project manager to work things out. But this does not mean you should assume every detail has been addressed. Never assume anything where safety is concerned. Another important point is this: If the other trade is supposed to do something, verify they have done it. For example, if they are supposed to block a spring-loaded device for you, have them show you the blocking and explain why it's safe.]*

6. What's wrong with taking a break in a switchgear yard, instead of trudging all the way to the break room in the main building?

7. If the customer has a scissor lift that would make your job easier, is it OK to just borrow it for a few minutes? Why or why not?

8. If a pipefitter wants to use your conduit bender, why should you say no?

9. What's wrong with building shelters out of scrap wood or cardboard you found on site?

10. You've been greatly amused over some of the wisecracks you've heard over the PA system. You have a few of your own that you think are pretty funny. Is there a problem with joining in on the joking over the PA system?

Participant's Signature and Date

[illegible]