

Toolbox Talks 2

066: Unsafe Acts: Toxins

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review your company's Hazard Communication System documents and any procedures related to handling chemicals.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Most injuries occur not due to unsafe conditions, but due to unsafe acts. This Safety Talk addresses some unsafe acts related to toxins.

Discussion notes:

Toxin facts

- A toxin is anything that can make you sick.
- Toxins have several routes for entering the body. You can breathe them or eat them, or they can enter through the skin.
- Toxin effects include a wide range of symptoms, from nausea to death.
- The effects of toxins might not be apparent immediately. By the time you realize you've been exposed, it may be too late.
- There are two primary ways to protect yourself from toxins. These are limiting the exposure and using PPE.

Unsafe acts with toxins

- Working in an area that contains toxins, without first noting the location of emergency showers, eyewashes, and other appropriate safety equipment.
- Working with or around a toxic substance without first reviewing the MSDS for the necessary precautions. If you don't know where the MSDS is, contact your foreman.
- Using the PPE incorrectly or not at all. To determine what PPE is required, review the MSDS and product label of the substance you are using or working around.
- Using fingers instead of tools. For example, use pliers or a wire hook to dip a part in solvent.
- Mixing incompatible chemicals. Mixing even some common cleaners can create a toxic cloud. Don't mix chemicals unless you find a reference showing compatibility.
- Leaving lids off containers. Lids reduce the amount of solvent or other toxin released to the air you breathe. Use the smallest possible work container, and keep lids on any container not actually in use.
- Careless cleaning. For example, you clean the dust out of a cabinet in a chemical processing area. What precautions are you taking against breathing the dust or making skin contact with it?
- Eating or drinking in an undesignated area. This is one way to needlessly ingest a toxin. Carrying an open beverage container through an undesignated area is also unsafe. Keep drinks and food in designated areas, only.
- Not reporting an exposure. Even suspected exposure is reportable incident. Waiting to see "if" you should report it based on how you feel later is incorrect. There's no if.

Review and discussion

1. What is a toxin?
2. How can toxins enter the body?

4. What should you do before starting work in an area that contains toxic chemical processes?

6. Why is PPE important, and what does its importance say about proper use?

8. If you need to use a small amount of a chemical cleaning compound that comes only in ten-gallon containers, what should you do?

9. What are the rules on food and drink on sites where toxins may be present?

10. What's the rule on reporting an exposure? Why is this rule important?

Participant's Signature and Date

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