

## TOOLBOX TALK #5

### CONTROLLING WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Before you can eliminate a hazard, you must first use appropriate means to recognize it. Safety experts offer the following tips for identifying safety and health hazards in the workplace:

- Observe the jobsite. Using a checklist when performing safety inspections can help track potentially unsafe conditions.
- Listen to complaints and feedback from employees. A survey of employees can help determine where hazards may exist.
- Pay attention to circumstances that may have led to incidents and near misses in the past.
- Examine employee sickness records for any possible trends.

Once hazards have been identified, the National Safety Council recommends attempting to engineer the hazard out of the work process before relying on administrative controls or personal protective equipment. Examples of engineering controls include:

**Substitution:** Replace toxic chemicals with less harmful ones. Although no chemicals can be considered completely “safe”, annual reviews of the chemicals your workers are exposed to can help determine a safer substitute.

**Process change:** Modify methods or equipment to make work procedures safer.

**Isolation:** Reduce the number of workers who come in contact with a hazard by enclosing the work activity. This will not eliminate the hazard, but it does minimize potential exposure.

**Exhaust ventilation:** Reduce hazards created from chemical gases by using local exhaust ventilation systems to suck fumes away from the breathing zone of the person doing the work. General ventilation, although less effective, is commonly used to bring “fresh” air into the workplace.

**Wet methods:** Reduce dust generation by spraying water on dusty areas, or mixing water with materials that create dust.

