

TOOLBOX TALK #8

UNDERSTANDING SAFETY TRAINING

Training is an essential tool for employers to meet their duty to provide a workplace safe from harm. Government regulations and industry standards require that employees receive training so that work will be performed in a safe manner.

Training is defined in new industry standards as the instruction to enable the trainee to become a qualified person regarding the task to be performed, including knowledge, regarding potential hazards. Training is the foundation of learning and combined with experience, creates the knowledge and skills to become qualified to perform specific tasks.



Training and instruction involve imparting information, a definition that implies the information is presented in a manner the recipient is capable of understanding.

In practical terms, this means that an employer must instruct its employees using both a language and vocabulary that the employees can understand. For example, if an employee does not speak or comprehend English, instruction must be provided in a language an employee can understand. Similarly, if the employee's vocabulary is limited, the training must account for that limitation. By the same token, if the employees are not literate, telling them to read training materials will not satisfy the employer's training obligation. As a general matter, employers are expected to realize that if they customarily need to communicate work instructions or other workplace information to employees at a certain vocabulary level or in a language other than English, they will also need to provide safety and health training to employees in the same manner.

In the US, a growing Spanish-speaking population has raised awareness of the need to provide training in Spanish. Each worker must receive training that they can understand. Language, literacy and comprehension issues must be identified and addressed prior to training.

OSHA policy states, "if a reasonable person would conclude that they employer had not conveyed the training to its employees in a manner they were capable of understanding, then a violation may be cited."