

Tailgate/Toolbox Safety Meetings Get Results

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Each year several serious and fatal accidents are caused by inadequately trained employees including employees who are newly hired, employees with newly assigned duties, and employees who are using tools and equipment with which they are unfamiliar.

In California, every employer must have a safety program that includes employee training and instruction on general and job-specific safety and health work practices. The construction industry is legally required to conduct “tailgate” or “toolbox” safety meetings or the equivalent for their employees at least every 10 working days and for tunneling crews at least weekly. Tailgate/toolbox safety meetings are generally 10-15 minute on-the-job meetings held to keep employees informed about safe work practices and alerted to possible work-related risks.

A good tailgate/toolbox safety meeting is the product of careful planning. Part of that planning should include an assessment of the skill level of the workers then structuring the training accordingly. The topic for the meeting should be about a health and safety problem that really exists or could exist on the job or in the course of their work. Topics can cover work practices, machinery, tools, equipment, materials, attitudes or anything else that may cause or contribute to work-related accidents or illnesses. Once the topic has been chosen, establish clear and realistic training objectives. Decide what should be said and how it can best be communicated for worker understanding and retention. Sometimes, this may require the translation help of someone who speaks the common language of the attendees, if they are not fluent in English.

If you want the meeting to be effective and you want worker participation, hold the meeting during work time. These on-site meetings are best held at the beginning of the shift, right after lunch or after a break. At these short meetings, workers should be encouraged to participate as much as possible. Ask questions of the group or ask them for a demonstration of the desired action.

Document the training. Meeting records should state the date, time, personnel present, subjects discussed, and any corrective actions taken. These records are to be maintained for the duration of each attendee’s employment.

Not only are tailgate/toolbox safety meetings required by law, they have also proven their worth to employers by alerting employees to workplace hazards and by preventing accidents, illnesses, and on-the-job injuries. For the convenience of its insureds, State Compensation Insurance Fund’s has placed on its website, www.scif.com, over 200 different safety meeting/tailgate/toolbox articles available for download in English and in Spanish. Each topic includes a lined page to record the date, topic, and attendees who were present for training. □