SAFETY TOPICS & MEETINGS

TRANSFORM BORING & INEFFECTIVE TO ENGAGING & REWARDING
INTRODUCTION

Why Should I Read This Guide And Become a Pro at Selecting Safety Topics and Conducting Safety Meetings?

Most businesses have one thing in common: the desire to help employees stay safe and keep the costs of doing business low. But many companies struggle to align their people, processes, and policies to really make safety a priority every day.

It’s a basic fact that most people do not retain everything they learn. This holds true in a variety of situations. Whether you are taking a class at a university, at home trying to teach your kids for the hundredth time, or at work in a training meeting, the person being trained or taught will likely miss some points along the way.

Because workplace safety is an extremely important topic for any business, employees missing important points along the way can have devastating effects. As a result, finding a way to make safety a key focus each day should be a top priority to ensure the safety and health of all individuals at a particular job site.

Fortunately, a fairly simple solution is to hold regular meetings focused on particular safety topics. As you will read, safety meetings can mean different things to different businesses. However, generally speaking, safety meetings are typically brief (15-20 minutes) discussions with employees about the safety hazards that exist in the work environment that occur on a regular basis. Some businesses hold safety meetings less frequently, but the duration of the meeting may be significantly longer.
In some states and industries, holding safety meetings is actually a requirement! The purpose of these requirements is to encourage employers to communicate and evaluate safety and health issues, work together with employees to prevent accidents and injuries, and discuss the safety topics relevant to a particular workplace.

There's a right way to hold a safety meeting and there's a wrong way to hold a safety meeting. It can be difficult balancing trying to inform others of important safety topics and keeping employees engaged.

This is why you need to become a pro at selecting safety topics and conducting safety meetings! Keep reading to learn how you can say no to boring and ineffective safety meetings and turn them into something engaging and rewarding.

"There's a right way to hold a safety meeting and there's a wrong way to hold a safety meeting."
What is a Safety Meeting?

There are different types of safety meetings, including committee meetings and toolbox talks.

SAFETY MEETINGS

A safety meeting is usually a brief (15-20 minutes) discussion with employees about safety hazards that exist in their work environment. The purpose of the safety meeting is to conduct general safety instruction and training, and to inform employees about safety policies, rules, and expectations.

Safety meetings are also one of the best methods to motivate workers to get safety out of the classroom and into the field. Safety meetings can be formal or informal and can cover a variety of topics. Safety meetings are important to the success of your safety program because they impact all of the following:

1. **Safety meetings encourage safety awareness.** Other means of getting the safety message across are often too easily ignored. But, when a group of workers get together to discuss the hazards they have encountered and the steps they can take to eliminate them, it increases each worker's safety consciousness.

2. **Safety meetings get employees actively involved.** In a sense, safety meetings put employees "on the spot"; that is, they demand feedback. They get employees thinking about safety and encourage them to come up with ideas and suggestions for preventing accidents and minimizing the hazards with which they are most familiar.

3. **Safety meetings motivate employees to follow proper safety practices.** Small group meetings are the best place to demonstrate the uses of protective equipment, proper lifting techniques and other safety procedures.

4. **Safety meetings can help to nip safety hazards in the bud.** A safety meeting is the time to pinpoint minor hazards before they result in real problems. It also presents a good opportunity to discuss hazards that are inherent in the environment and that experienced employees are likely to take for granted.
PART 1: WHAT IS A SAFETY MEETING?

5. Safety meetings introduce workers to new safety rules, equipment, and preventive practices. In addition to introducing new things, a safety meeting is a good time to reinforce the importance of long-standing safety procedures and to remind employees of the reasons behind them.

6. Safety meetings provide vital information on accident causes and types. Regular meetings are the best way of keeping employees up-to-date on the hazards in their environment and what can be done about them. They also make it easier for the company to maintain accurate accident statistics, an important tool in tracing the progress of prevention efforts.

SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The safety committee is a formally structured group of individuals who meet to conduct safety-related business. This gives everyone a voice, but keeps the meeting size to an effective number of participants. Establishing workplace-safety committees is also one way management can encourage employees to participate in implementing and monitoring the company’s safety program.

Typical responsibilities of workplace-safety committees include:

- Developing safe work practices.
- Crafting written safety programs.
- Leading safety training.
- Conducting workplace inspections and safety audits.
- Reviewing incidents, near misses, accident investigation reports, claim summaries and loss analyses to prevent reoccurrences of similar incidents.
- Establishing dispute resolution procedures.
- Proposing and creating safety checklists.
- Promoting employees’ interests in health and safety issues.
- Providing a forum in which labor and management can discuss health and safety issues and collaborate on solutions.

Ultimately, the purpose of safety committees is to help reduce the risk of workplace injuries and illnesses and ensure compliance with federal and state health and safety regulations.
PART 1: WHAT IS A SAFETY MEETING?

TOOLBOX TALKS

Toolbox Talks are an easy way for foremen and supervisors to implement the OSHA training efforts of their company or organization. These talks usually focus on a specific topic and can be used daily to promote your worksite safety culture.

The meeting should be held in comfortable location at the start of a shift, after lunch or break, or even incorporated into another meeting. Toolbox talks do not replace formal safety training. They can also be used for post-accident communications, re-enforcement of safe work practices, and pre-task planning for hands-on training in the future.

There are several things you should remember if you want to run a successful toolbox meeting.

Here are some things to remember for your next toolbox talk:

- Hold the meeting on-the-job. Employees should be able to sit and relax to ensure a good learning atmosphere.
- Schedule meetings before a work shift or after a break. This will help employees keep safety in the forefront of their minds as they work.
- Be thoughtful about your topic selection. Safety topics important in one industry or workplace are not necessarily relevant to another. Topics should be about health and safety problems that relate to a specific job.
- Topics should not be too broad. You may need to research topics thoroughly before the meeting. Some example of documents you may want to review are manufacturer’s operations manuals and Safety Data Sheets (SDS).
- Encourage employee participation, during and after meetings. One great way to get employees involved is to allow them to choose and teach topics. This also helps them retain the information!
- Keep the meeting short, usually 10 to 15 minutes.

From safety meetings, committee meetings, and toolbox talks, there is a lot of overlap between each type. For the purpose of this whitepaper, we will be focusing mostly on safety meetings.
When Is The Best Time To Conduct A Safety Meeting?

What day of the week should I hold a safety meeting?

Monday and Friday typically are the least effective days to hold an important meeting as many employees tend to use these days to have an extended three-day weekend. Employees also tend to be in “weekend-mode” on Monday and on Friday. Many workers are more likely to rush through the workday to get to the weekend.

For productivity and participation reasons, it is generally better to conduct meetings on either Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Early morning meetings should be avoided, if possible, as employees may still be tired. If you choose late afternoon meetings, employees will tend to watch the clock and think about the end of the day.

Mealtimes can also directly affect a meeting. Employees are likely sluggish directly after eating. By 3PM, their pre-lunch energy level has resumed. Also, if you decide to conduct a meeting during a mealtime, whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner, you may consider providing food. Many employees find it productive to eat and still work at the same time. If you do not provide an entire meal, you may consider offering hot coffee or small refreshments.

“The key is to take the time to find what works best for your employees.”
PART 2: WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO CONDUCT A SAFETY MEETING?

Many businesses have found a mid-morning meeting is very effective as employees have had time to settle in, are more alert, and have not dealt with numerous tasks yet. Enthusiasm will remain throughout the day.

Time is a very important factor in any business decision. The best time to conduct a certain task, such as an important safety meeting, may depend on your business and employees. The key is to take the time to find what works best for your employees.

Careful consideration should be given to the frequency, length, and location of meetings. Safety meetings that occur too frequently may not accomplish much. As goals and objectives are achieved, less frequent meetings may be sufficient, but not less than quarterly. To help with member planning and attendance, meetings should be scheduled in advance. One suggestion is to have the meetings at the same time on the same day of the month, such as every third Thursday.

“...if you decide to conduct a meeting during a mealtime, whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner, you may consider providing food.”
Safety Meeting Structure

Have you ever heard of the “Rule of Three?” Some people say bad things come in threes while others say good things come in threes, but the main point is this: things that come in threes are inherently more profound and effective. The “Rule of Three” applies to safety meeting structure, too. Think about the whole process surrounding a safety meeting as having three parts or stages:

1. **Preparation**
2. **Conducting**
3. **Following-up**

To have an effective and engaging safety meeting, you should always at least have these three stages. You may think this is a no brainer, but you wouldn't believe how many people skim through the preparation process, conduct the safety meeting, and then never think about what was discussed ever again. It's no wonder employees dread safety meetings and why some employers do not see any return-on-investment (ROI).

Let’s look at the preparation, conducting, and following-up of a safety meeting a little more closely.
Just as it is important to prepare your body for a marathon, it is important to prepare yourself and others for a safety meeting.

Preparing for a safety meeting should involve more than just selecting a safety topic based upon a Google search and then typing up a script that is to be read word-for-word. That makes for a pretty boring safety meeting.

If you care about the success of your safety meeting, then you must prepare! Your preparation process should look something like this:

1. Know the purpose of the meeting.
2. Select a presenter or meeting leader.
3. Choose a safety topic.
4. Ensure employees are aware of meeting time and place.
5. Prepare any necessary handouts.
6. Practice your presentation.
1. KNOW THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The purpose of the safety meeting can also be thought of as the goal(s) of the safety meeting. Before we elaborate, here’s another quote to get us going:

“Without goals, and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination.”
—Fitzhugh Dodson

The purpose or goal of a safety meeting is extremely important. Without it, it’s hard to know how to select a safety topic and if you are achieving success. A safety meeting goal can originate from a variety of places. Safety program goals, employee suggestions, accidents and injuries, and industry regulations are just a few places to start.

EXAMPLES OF SAFETY MEETING GOALS

• Increase awareness of a specific hazard.
• Encourage employees to make safety suggestions.
• Explain the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
• Decrease the frequency of a certain type of injury/illness.
• Demonstrate an updated standard operating procedure or work process.

These goals are obviously pretty general, but you can easily make them more specific to address the needs of your workplace and employees.

To take your goal setting a step further, see if you can turn an ordinary goal into a SMART goal. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

For example:
• Increase awareness of ladder fall hazards by 50%.
• Encourage employees to make at least one safety suggestion every month.
• Decrease the frequency of amputations by 70%.
PREPARATION

2. SELECT A PRESENTER OR MEETING LEADER

A common misconception is that a manager or supervisor must be the person who conducts a safety meeting. Though it is important for at least one member of management to be present at safety meetings, it does not mean that he or she must always be the main presenter.

In fact, having a variety of presenters can help increase the effectiveness of safety meetings and keep things fresh. No matter how interesting a person is, it can get boring hearing from the same person over and over again.

Furthermore, the more you involve employees, the more you make safety a priority. Employees are more likely to implement and put importance on things they contribute to. Make them accountable for safety and value their willingness to participate. This helps them develop in their careers and positively affects the safety culture within a workplace.
PREPARATION

UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF YOUR AUDIENCE

Before you say or write something, think about those who will be listening to your message. How do they want to hear about a safety topic? The starting point for all communication, even when it comes to communicating a safety message in a meeting, is becoming aware of the intended audience and approaching them on an appropriate level.

The field of advertising offers some significant insight on the topic of understanding and reaching your designated audience (in your case, employees or co-workers). In the advertising world, knowing your audience and communicating to them in the most effective way involves a three-part process (Are you getting tired of this “Rule of Three” thing yet?):

1. Segmentation
2. Targeting
3. Positioning

Though this three-part process typically has a consumer-focus, our descriptions have an employee-focus in order to apply the concepts to safety topics and meetings.

SEGMENTATION

Segmentation involves finding out what kinds of employees exist and what their needs are. Employees can be described and placed into groups that contain similar variables. Some of the variables you may use to segment the employees in your workplace include:

- Demographics (gender, worksite location, age, etc.)
- Behavior (those who are dedicated to working safely, those who value safety but don’t seem to understand the rules, those who do not see the importance of safety, etc.)
- Values (money, recognition, family, etc.)

You do not necessarily need to manually write employee names on a board and put them into specific categories or employee segments. Simply do your best to gain an understanding of what employee segments do exist in the workplace and what their needs are.

3. CHOOSE A SAFETY TOPIC

The safety topics you select will largely depend on the industry you work in and any pressing workplace safety needs at your jobsite. And, as mentioned previously, the purpose or goal of the safety meeting should be another guiding factor that contributes to your safety topic selection as well.

Again with the “Rule of Three”, think about choosing a safety topic as having three parts:

1. Understand your audience.
2. Select the safety topics and content for your safety meeting based upon audience needs.
3. Write out an outline or agenda for your safety meeting.
PREPARATION

TARGETING
In the advertising world, targeting involves deciding which segments are the most attractive and choosing one or more segments to advertise to.

Because you are more concerned about workplace safety, you actually have to target and cater to ALL of the employee segments you have determined. Your safety topics and meetings need to reach every type of employee in the workplace. This can be quite difficult!

POSITIONING
Positioning involves implementing your targeting. Because you must target all of the employees within your workplace, you must determine how to position (or portray) safety messages to the various employee segments and how to best appeal to each segment.

Once you are equipped with this information and knowledge, choosing a safety topic and developing your agenda will become much more effective!

“Segmentation involves finding out what kinds of employees exist and what their needs are.”

“Because you must target all of the employees within your workplace, you must determine ... how to best appeal to each segment.”
PART 3: SAFETY MEETING STRUCTURE

PREPARATION

SELECT THE SAFETY TOPICS AND CONTENT FOR YOUR MEETING

Some of the safety topics you select may come directly from analyzing your employees and the various safety needs within your organization. However, there are certainly other factors you should take into consideration when selecting a particular safety topic.

One of the main deciding factors for choosing a safety topic is the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA has a variety of regulations surrounding various safety topics and industries you will want to refer to when selecting a safety topic and developing content for your safety meeting.

Resources

If you work in the general industry, an office setting, or another industry not listed on the right, you can either refer to OSHA’s or the CDC’s general safety and health topic list or do a little research online.

OSHA Academy’s free online safety training courses can also give you a variety of safety topic ideas and can help you develop content that meets the needs of employees.

SAFETY TOPIC SOURCES

The Internet has a variety of safety topic sources. So, rather than list out all of the potential safety topics you may want to consider, here are a couple general sources you may want to review when selecting a safety topic for your safety meeting:

1. OSHA’s Alphabetical List of Safety and Health Topics
2. CDC’s Alphabetical List of Safety and Health Topics

Industry-specific safety topic sources:

1. Washington State’s List of Construction Safety Meeting Subjects
2. CDC’s List of Healthcare Safety and Health Topics
3. MSHA’s List of Mining Safety Topics
4. OSHA’s List of Maritime Safety Topics
5. Texas State’s List of Manufacturing
PREPARATION

WRITE AN OUTLINE OR AGENDA FOR YOUR SAFETY MEETING

So, you have an understanding about the safety topics that should be discussed in your safety meeting based upon employee needs and regulations. Now it's time to organize the information in an outline or agenda!

Here is a sample safety meeting agenda:

1. Welcome
   • Thank everyone for attending.
   • Offer some snacks or refreshments.
   • Briefly outline the agenda.

2. Accidents, injuries, near-misses
   • Discuss incidents that have occurred in your company since the last meeting.
   • Review any follow-up that has been done as a result of investigations into incidents.
   • Talk about incidents that have happened in other companies.
   • Inform of updates to the company's Accident Prevention Plan.

3. Results of safety inspections
   • Discuss the results of recent safety inspections.
   • Follow-up on assignments for eliminating or controlling identified hazards.

4. Training
   • Discuss any new safe work procedures or policies that need to be implemented.
   • Present and discuss other safety topics relevant to your workplace.

5. Open forum
   • Encourage anyone who has a concern about safety to bring it up for discussion.

6. Closing
   • Thank everyone again for attending.
   • Provide a brief summary of key points of action that need to be implemented.

This agenda can be shortened or lengthened depending on the duration of the safety meeting you will be holding, but it at least provides a general guide regarding the safety topics and content that should be included in a safety meeting.
PART 3: SAFETY MEETING STRUCTURE

PREPARATION

4. ENSURE EMPLOYEES ARE AWARE OF MEETING TIME AND PLACE
Be sure to communicate to employees meeting time and place. You may want to also consider sending them your proposed agenda, so they can mentally prepare and begin thinking about how they can contribute to the meeting.

If you are hoping employees to come with ideas about a specific topic or concern, be sure to explain any expectations and hopes you have surrounding the meeting so everyone is on the same page.

5. PREPARE ANY NECESSARY HANDOUTS
As part of your safety meeting, you may be able to increase effectiveness, engagement, and knowledge retention by having a handout you give to employees. Some examples of safety meeting handouts include:

- Flyer or fact sheet
- Keychain
- Lanyard
- Magnet
- Pen
- Mug
- Sticker

If you are going to invest time, money, and/or effort into a handout, think about what will be most meaningful. A handout should serve as a good reminder of the information discussed, something employees are likely to use or see on a frequent basis. If a handout is likely to be thrown away ten minutes after you hold your safety meeting, you may not need a handout at all.

6. PRACTICE YOUR PRESENTATION
Your presentation will not be effective if you read from a script, rely too much on notes, or use PowerPoint slides as cue cards. Instead, you need to practice and rehearse your presentation enough so you can give all your attention to your audience—your employees or co-workers.

Practice your presentation the way you will deliver it. Rehearse standing, speaking aloud, and with the proper passion, pacing, and movement.

Will this kind of rehearsing make you look fake? Not at all! You will be a more confident presenter and make a bigger impact on your audience.
CONDUCTING A SAFETY MEETING

Well, it’s just about time to start the meeting. Everyone knows where and when the meeting is. They have all received an agenda, so it’s a done deal, right?

Well, not necessarily so. There are a few actions to take just before and during the meeting to make sure it runs smoothly. Here are some important things to do just before the meeting starts:

• Arrive early. 30 minutes should suffice for a safety meeting. However, if training is included in the agenda, you may want to show up an hour early to make sure all gear and training materials are in proper order.
• Set up the room. Make sure there are enough tables, chairs, pencils, and paper. Ensure the lights and electricity work.
• What about refreshments? A small investment can result in a big return!
To effectively conduct a safety meeting, be sure to follow these additional best practices:

- Call the meeting to order and start at the appointed time.
- Note attendance. You may want to have a recorder or sign-in sheet. The attendance and safety topics discussed should be filed in a safe place, as this is information OSHA would take a look at if your workplace is selected for an inspection.
- You may want to review ground rules to clarify what is acceptable behavior during the meeting (e.g., don't interrupt while another person is speaking, raise your hand to be recognized, don't make negative comments about another person, etc.).
- Follow your agenda and be sure to engage with your audience.
- End the meeting on time.
- More tips for conducting a safety meeting will be discussed later in the whitepaper!
Another meeting has just been completed, you've thanked everyone for coming, and they're returning to their work. Is your job done?

Not yet!
There may be some minor paperwork you need to get done and you still haven't followed-up on assignments and action items. The follow-up stage may be the most important part of the whole process.

Here are some things you may want to consider after you have conducted a safety meeting:

- Finalize meeting notes or minutes.
- Send a copy of safety meeting notes to employees.
- Provide an evaluation or survey to employees who attended.
- Keep track of any action items and implementations needed.

FINALIZE MEETING NOTES
It's important not to wait to complete and finalize any of the notes taken during the meeting. The longer you wait to finalize the meeting minutes, the less able you'll be to accurately put down on paper what happened, who was assigned tasks, and the associated time frames.

You will want to be sure you attach a couple items to your safety meeting minutes, if applicable:

- Attendance sheet or record.
- Recommendations or safety suggestions made by employees.
- Action items that were assigned, who they were assigned to, and the date needed.
- Anything else used or discussed in the meeting.

After you have completed and compiled all of the safety meeting notes, be sure to store in a safe place. Seek out applicable OSHA regulations regarding how long you should keep the minutes of safety meetings, as this may vary depending on your industry and the type of safety meeting you are holding.
FOLLOWING-UP

SEND A COPY OF SAFETY MEETING NOTES TO EMPLOYEES

After you have finalized any meeting notes, you should consider sending them out to employees and co-workers. Not only will attendees benefit from a reminder of what was discussed, but it's also a good idea to fill in employees who were unable to attend for whatever reason.

You can provide employees with these notes via email, a newsletter, or even post them on a bulletin board.

PROVIDE A SURVEY

When it comes to safety, continual improvement is vital.

Try sending out a survey or evaluation form to employees who attended the safety meeting and provide comments to the presenter. You can also interview individual employees and co-workers.

What questions should be asked in a safety meeting survey? You can probably think of a few, but refer to some of the examples below if needed:

- Was the safety meeting fun?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of the safety meeting?
- Were positive safety recognitions given at the meeting?
- Do you think current safety issues are being resolved/addressed in a timely manner?
- What would make our safety meetings better?

KEEP TRACK OF ACTION ITEMS

What kind of message do you think you will send if safety recommendations and action items are made in a safety meeting, but nothing is ever done to address or implement those items? Not a very good one, that's for sure.

If there are items that require some sort of action or assignment that result from the safety meeting, be sure you take the proper steps to follow-up, track, and implement those items. This will help improve workplace safety and increase the priority of safety among employees. It's important for managers and other safety leaders to show dedication to safety by taking action, not just talking about it!
Effective safety meetings should be engaging and memorable. No one likes to hear, “ugg, another safety meeting?” In other words, you should try and make safety “sexy.” If it is not fun or engaging for those attending, they will not remember it. So, how do you do that? Here are some not-always apparent tips to holding effective safety meetings.

**REMOVE SHADED SAFETY GLASSES**
If you work outdoors, say on a construction site, you may be required to wear eye protection. However, that is not a good idea if you are leading a pre-shift or toolbox safety meeting. It’s all about eye contact. If your audience cannot make eye contact with you, they have a harder time connecting with your message.

**CONDUCT A HAZARD HUNT**
This is an excellent way to maximize engagement and increase safety awareness at your next safety meeting. The goal is to be on site and have workers look around to see if they can find any noticeable hazards that may eventually cause problems. This “hunt” gets them actively involved and thinking about the job and its hazards.
PART 4: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SAFETY MEETING

“"A good catch happens when someone notices a hazard and does something about it before it results in a near miss or an incident.""

ROTATE SAFETY MEETING LEADERS
One of the mistakes many companies make is to assume safety meetings should only be run by one specific person. However, this limits the role to titled leaders and it misses a great opportunity to develop your front-line employees to become safety leaders as well.

Rotating safety meeting leaders also allows you to apply safety leadership solutions to the development of your employees.

EMPHASIZE GOOD CATCHES
The difference between a “near miss” and a “good catch” is the difference between a lagging indicator and a leading indicator. A near miss is simply an incident where no one got hurt, and often pure luck was the only thing that prevented an injury. A good catch happens when someone notices a hazard and does something about it before it results in a near miss or an incident. Reporting near misses has value, but it’s not predictive. It doesn’t tell us what comes next. On the other hand, reporting good catches indicates people are actively looking for hazards, which has a much greater value in a safety culture.

USE INCIDENT REPORTS TO LAUNCH SAFETY DISCUSSIONS
Incident reports are great tools for safety discussions. However, keep in mind they are very mechanical in the way they are written. They tend to report the mechanics of that incident, and NOT the impact the incident had on the person who got hurt and on his/her family. It is better to tell the story rather than simply writing the report.
**INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN SAFETY MEETINGS**

There are several things you can do to increase employee participation in your safety meetings. Here are a few tips:

1. **Hold Safety Conversations rather than safety meetings.** What you call something can affect how it is perceived. Marketers make millions figuring out what to call new products. If you call your gatherings Safety Conversations, the connotation is you will create opportunities for two-way dialog. Employees will show up with the mindset they can contribute their thoughts.

2. **Instead of an agenda, ask a question.** Agendas can be very useful for keeping meetings on track. You might want to schedule a so-called “Question Session” to discuss a relevant safety topic or a recent incident? Yes, some of you skeptics are thinking: “This will turn into an instant gripe session or it will get completely out of hand.” It could. But, think about how you can facilitate it by setting a specific timeframe and stick to it. Use your best skills to keep the discussion on track so it relates to the question at hand.

3. **Create a moving experience.** Who said safety meetings have to be sit-down sessions? There are times when it makes sense to have people sit around the table to look at diagrams or drawings and to write notes. But, what would happen if you made some of your safety meetings highly interactive with hands-on exhibits? For example, if you are discussing the use of hard hats, you could have a table display of various types of hard hats your company purchases. At another table, an expert could show employees how to properly adjust and clean their hard hats. In effect, you could have a “walk-around” meeting.

You may need to experiment with these ideas and others to increase the conversational element in your safety meetings. Look for ways to have more informal safety sessions that will energize and engage everyone.
How to Engage Employees & Encourage Participation

OSHA reports almost four million Americans suffer from a workplace injury every year. However, when you mention “safety meeting” at your worksite, workers tend to view them unenthusiastically. But, you can turn your next safety meeting into an enjoyable experience.

When it comes to improving the health and safety performance at your company, most managers believe worker involvement is a key to success. Positive relationships between employers and employees can help enhance productivity when it comes to safety.
9 Strategies for Engaging Employees & Encouraging Participation

Here are some strategies for building better safety meetings that engage the participants:

1. People engage with other people. In other words, you should not rely on PowerPoint to get your message across to your employees.
2. Select an interesting topic. This is the key to running a successful safety meeting. When used properly, specific topics teach workers safety awareness and also emphasize the importance of safety in the workplace.
3. Ask for opinions. Sometimes, it is better to ask workers what they want to talk about during the meeting, rather than supplying a topic of your choice. Discussing the most serious safety issues workers face on a daily basis encourages the group to come back for more meetings.
4. Questions are possibly one of the most powerful tools of a good leader. By not asking questions, one assumes they know all the answers. Not all workers have the personality style to step forward with suggestions or potential problems. When asked, however, many will offer more than expected. This is especially true if they are convinced their input is truly needed and wanted. Most people have something to contribute and will provide input when asked.
5. Make a big impression. For example, using scenarios and real-life accidents with photos can do the trick. You can also have guest speakers, such as health care professionals, paramedics, safety consultants, and even workers who have suffered a workplace injury.
6. Educate your audience. Teach employees about how to apply job-specific safety procedures at the meeting. You can also use safety workshops to illustrate a specific task, such as providing first aid in different situations.
7. Keep it simple. One idea at a time. As you know, safety meetings are critical to the on-going safety of your employees. But, you cannot just stick to any one thing for every meeting, and think, “well, we had our meeting.” It is definitely not just about filling a timeslot. It is about making sure you advance a new idea and call-to-action. Your organization needs to become better—not just better-informed—when it comes to safety. You should shorten your meeting with just one thought at a time. Consider using either newsletters or videos to supplement the training once the meeting is finished.
8. Create a call-to-action. This is what you want participants to do differently after you finish the safety meeting. It’s not enough to just know the information. You must now do something with the information. That’s why you start with a call-to-action in planning and work backwards from there.
9. Get feedback. You want to make sure your employees continue to attend the safety meetings. Therefore, make sure you get their feedback after each meeting. Encourage them to give you a few suggestions for making your safety meetings more interesting. Feedback can be given during the meeting or more anonymously by filling out a rating and suggestion sheet. Be sure to check the suggestions and make changes accordingly.
As you've probably noticed, not all safety meetings and topics are created equal. Some can be boring and ineffective, while others are engaging and rewarding for all involved. So, when thinking about choosing safety topics and conducting pro-status safety meetings, be sure to avoid these top four meeting fails.

**MEETING FAIL #1: BEING TOO GENERIC**
Many companies buy templates for their safety meetings and topics that are too cookie-cutter and generic. These templates have been dumbed-down to appeal to as many industries as possible.

Generic safety meetings may talk about safety reports, inspections, incident reports, processes, and procedures, but they are so mind-numbing they are likely to put your employees to sleep. They also don't build safety buy-in.

**MEETING FAIL #2: ACTING LIKE A LONG-WINDED COP**
Don't just harp on safety rules during safety meetings. Though you want employees to follow safety rules and for there to be accountability for those rules, acting like a cop will only alienate people and negatively affect your workplace safety culture.

Instead, be a coach that builds motivation, ownership, and performance!
MEETING FAIL #3: READING FROM A SCRIPT
There’s nothing more boring and ineffective than listening to someone drone on while they read word-for-word a presentation they have prepared.

You should understand the safety topics within your presentation and engage with your audience during a safety meeting. Make eye contact! Be involved. Make the meetings a dynamic discussion rather than a one-way communication process that puts others to sleep.

MEETING FAIL #4: FAULT-FINDING AND NAME-CALLING
Though it may be important to discuss previous accidents and injuries during your safety meeting, don’t start naming names and placing blame on specific individuals for safety incidents. That’s just bad form.

Also, it can be quite effective to include an open forum timeslot during your safety meeting where employees can voice safety and health concerns. However, don’t reduce another’s idea to nothing by calling the person or the idea “bad” or “stupid” or any other negative word. Don’t let other employees be negative towards other ideas either. You should make it very clear at the beginning of the meeting or the open forum that this behavior is unacceptable.

“...don’t start naming names and placing blame on specific individuals for safety incidents. That’s just bad form.”
You may have heard this, “Ugh, anotherrr safety meeting?” During some safety meetings, the presenter tends to read a so-called “safety meeting script.” As you can imagine, this type of safety meeting is a waste of time and money. So, what are some ways to improve your meeting process?

When you decide some part of the safety meeting needs to be improved, it is important to use a systematic process to make sure the change is effective. We encourage the use of the Shewhart/Deming Plan-Do-Study-Act process. Let’s take a brief look at this process.
PART 7: IMPROVING THE MEETING PROCESS

■ Step 1: PLAN – DESIGN THE CHANGE OR TEST
Take time to thoroughly plan the proposed change before it is implemented. Pinpoint specific conditions, behaviors, and/or results you expect to see as a result of the change. For instance, you may want to include a short 10 minute training session in each meeting. You'll need to carefully plan who will conduct the training, what format will be used, and what subjects will be presented.

■ Step 2: DO – CARRY OUT THE CHANGE OR TEST
Implement the change or test it on a small scale. This will help limit the number of variables and potential damage if unexpected outcomes occur. Educate, train, and communicate the change to help everyone successfully transition. Keep the change small to better measure variables.

■ Step 3: STUDY – EXAMINE THE EFFECTS OR RESULTS OF THE CHANGE OR TEST
To determine what was learned and what went right or wrong. Statistical process analysis, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews will all help in this step.

■ Step 4: ACT – ADOPT, ABANDON, OR REPEAT THE CYCLE
Incorporate what works into the meeting process. Ask not only if we're doing the right things, but ask if we're doing things right. If the result was not as intended, abandon the change or begin the cycle again with the new knowledge gained.
If your safety meetings are to be successful, there are a few things you can take into account.

- Raise awareness of unsafe conditions and lead to corrective action.
- Raise awareness, without identifying violating employees, of unsafe behavior and the corrective action.
- Introduce new relevant safety guidelines and OSHA guidelines.
- Reinforce safety guidelines.
- Motivate employees to comply with generally accepted safe work practices.
- Help to internalize the importance of safety by including your employees in the process.

Safety meetings don't have to be pointless or boring. With a little bit of thought and preparation, your employees will leave the meeting informed, energized about safety, and interested in participating in future meetings. Isn't that better than them leaving the meeting with the “Whew, another safety meeting is now DONE!”
CASE STUDY

Applying the Key Points Discussed in this Paper

Todd Shilling, an HSE Professional who has worked in the oil and gas industry for more than 15 years, has increased the success of safety meetings at his company by generating engagement and involvement among employees.

At his company, safety meetings are typically held on a weekly basis, an hour after employees finish their shift. When talking to OSHAcademy about his experience, he said, “I must always remember that I only have about 30 ‘good minutes’ before I have lost them and they are falling asleep.” By keeping this in mind, he is able to pay attention to employees and cater his presentation to their needs.

Todd Shilling employs many of the key points discussed in this whitepaper. He also had a few suggestions to share himself that have helped the oil and gas company he works for make safety a priority and hold effective safety meetings. Some of the key points he discussed are included below.

Drill employees on the knowledge that is critical. At Todd’s company, they are heavy on the DPA (designated person ashore) and safety case issues. They constantly discuss these topics in daily and weekly meetings. Each meeting, they randomly select someone and ask them, “Hey, who is the DPA?” Todd explains, “This keeps people on their toes and also en-
gages them, if for no other reason than to not be embarrassed by not knowing the answer to simple questions."

Some guys like to be the head of the safety meetings, so have a crew member do a presentation. Todd recommends having the employee come to you a couple days ahead of time so you can work with them on the verbal portion of the presentation. To aid them with the presentation, you can be the one who prepares the PowerPoint or other visual aid that is relevant.

Use visual aids! For example, if you are talking about fall protection, take an old lanyard, rip it apart, and display it at the meeting to show employees the shock absorber actually works and what is inside there. "I have ripped them open with a crane (one end attached to a pad eye on deck and one to the crane hook). The guys really liked this," Todd recounts. "Get nasty, and don't be afraid to use graphic or gross pictures as examples of what can happen if safety procedures aren't followed."

An agenda is always nice, but Todd always makes sure to not be too rigid when it comes to deviating from the agenda. He says, "If the guys get stuck on a subject and it needs to be talked out, I always go for it. I just catch up on lower priority items another time."

Todd makes sure to never brow beat employees. He has found safety meetings to be more successful when he starts on negative subjects to drive them home, but always moves to and ends with positive highlights. Todd explains, "We may have a trend of not tying off tools when working aloft, but we did just work a week of intense operations without an incident or injury. This is a safety meeting, not a disciplinary hearing."

Just like Todd, you too can be a pro at choosing safety topics and conducting safety meetings to further occupational safety and health at your workplace.

"Use visual aids! For example, if you are talking about fall protection, take an old lanyard, rip it apart, and display it at the meeting..."
CONCLUSION

So, there you have it: everything you ever wanted to know (and then some) about safety topics and safety meetings.

Whether you're part of a small company or a corporation with 100 employees, the benefits of preparing, conducting, and following-up after safety meetings are widespread. Not only does it help you meet regulatory requirements, it also helps to increase the safety culture within your workplace and keep the costs of doing business low.

When you know how to select the most appropriate safety topics for your audience—your employees and co-workers—you will be on the road to success to make your safety meetings more engaging and effective.

We discussed a lot about safety meetings, but what about safety committee meetings? For more information about safety committee meetings, check out OSHAcademy courses 701 Effective OSH Committee Operations and 707 Effective OSH Committee Meetings.

(Psst. It’s free to access the training.)
Brief intro to OSHAcademy

ABOUT OSHACADEMY
OSHAcademy provides easy-to-use, self-paced, and affordable online safety training for employees and management. OSHAcademy safety training propels individuals, small businesses and large corporations towards safety excellence.

Because all of our training materials can be accessed for free by registering in our system, our courses are a great source that can be used for choosing safety topics and conducting safety meetings. Training certificates can be purchased for companies who want to document the employee training or for individuals who want to progress in their safety careers.

CONTACT OSHACADEMY
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CONVENIENCE AND FLEXIBILITY
OSHAcademy training is completely self-paced and can be viewed on a computer, tablet, smart phone, and other eReader devices. This allows you and/or your employees to train whenever and wherever you want.

REPORTING CAPABILITIES
For corporate clients, OSHAcademy offers helpful and easy-to-use reports to track employee training progress.

AFFORDABILITY AND DISCOUNTS
Whether you are an individual who wants to purchase training certificates for professional development purposes or a company who needs to train employees about safety, we offer much lower certificate packages than our competitors. We also offer corporate discounts for businesses who buy training certificates in bulk.

CUSTOMER SERVICE
Our friendly, professional, and knowledgeable staff is available to help. Unlike other computer-based training organizations, we want you and your employees to email or call our office if you have questions.

COMPETITIVE EDGE
As an individual, OSHAcademy training and certificates can set you apart from your peers, helping you reach jobs and promotions that weren’t possible before.

As a business, when you and your employees complete the training and purchase certificates, you can rise above your competition and communicate your focus on safety to your stakeholders. Organizations who make safety a priority and genuinely take the well-being of the human family into consideration are being demanded with great force in various marketplaces and industries.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Abbie has a Bachelor of Arts degree in electronic journalism from the University of Oregon. She spent eight years in the journalism field as a news producer. She has worked in the Occupational Safety and Health field for several years and writes articles and develops training material for OSHAcademy.

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SHANARI BAIRD
Shanari has a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing and advertising management. She has experience developing marketing plans, advertising campaigns, and business strategy. She has worked in the Occupational Safety and Health field for more than two years. Her passion is helping businesses and other organizations learn how to use safety to set themselves apart and rise above their competition.

TODD SHILLING
Todd has been involved with offshore oil and gas exploration and developmental drilling HSE for 15 years in multiple countries. He has a background in project HSE management. He has also worked as a paramedic and has been certified for more than 20 years.
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SAFETY TOPICS & MEETINGS

A free resource provided by:

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