



WEEKLY SAFETY WISDOM: THE POWER OF “MICRO” TRAINING

Whether you call them “Weekly Safety Wisdoms,” “Toolbox Talks,” “Tailgate Talks,” or some other name, quick, informal “micro” safety trainings are beneficial. Although micro training sessions aren’t a substitute for formal employee training programs, they can supplement the formal training program and help introduce new information and procedures that aren’t initially covered in formal training sessions. They can also provide quick refresher trainings on specific topics or after near misses and actual accidents.

WHAT ARE “MICRO” TRAININGS?

Micro trainings are a no-frill way to get your safety message down to the bare essentials. There are no notes, no fancy PowerPoint slides – just getting the point across directly and effectively to a small group of employees.

Micro training sessions are designed to quickly grab employees’ attention, be interesting, be brief with a few clear points, and end with a summary message they will remember.

BENEFITS OF MICRO TRAINING

Micro training can be plugged into busy schedules to relay new safety precautions or to reinforce the safety message.

Although micro trainings are usually presented by supervisors or managers, individual employees can take turns researching the safety message and presenting the talk.

Micro trainings can be presented right at the worksite where a particular job is being performed.

Micro trainings are great to use with seasonal or young employees to explain brief safety topics and reinforce the safety information they need to know.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN MICRO TRAINING SUBJECTS

Use the Seven “P” Plan:

Prepare. The whole session should last no more than 10-20 minutes, including time for Q&A. Being brief and concise often takes more time to prepare than longer training sessions. To select a topic, review OSHA regulations, incident investigations, near misses/close calls, talk to Safety Committee members about useful and timely topics, present a new piece of equipment, talk about potential hazards of a job employees will be performing that day/week. Use current events to drive home your safety message. Use incidents at your own workplace or stories from the newspaper or a safety periodical, news reports seen on television, etc.

Pinpoint. Focus on one topic and be clear about 3-5 points you want to make and for employees to remember. Personalize. Refer to your own workplace and operations. The more you can tailor the material to your own municipal workplace, the more effectively it will resonate with your employees.

Physical aids. Use physical objects and visual aids when appropriate (e.g. actual Personal Protective Equipment). Ask employee volunteers to help demonstrate the visual aid.

Prescribe. State precisely what should and should not be done to keep employees safe. Consider creating a one-page or postcard-sized handout that employees can post near the worksite or keep in their pocket to reinforce the message.

Participation. Micro trainings are an opportunity for the presenter to look employees in the eye and maximize interaction. Encourage employee participation.

Positivity. Don’t always focus on the negative such as potential hazards or unsafe acts. Also focus on times when work is being done safely and correctly.

Punchline. End with a short sentence or phrase that sums up your talk and is easy to remember. Think about the major point you want employees to remember, even if they forget everything else.

FINAL TIPS FOR MICRO TRAINING SESSIONS

Make micro training a habit. You don’t have to present them on a strict schedule, although you can. But do hold them frequently and regularly enough that employees come to expect them. Hold them at the beginning of a work shift, or in the field after rest breaks or lunch periods.

Document. Micro training sessions qualify as safety training every bit as much as more formal training sessions. Keep a record of your talks, including date, time, place, subject and employees in attendance. Make note of any valuable suggestions or comments made during the session.

Follow up. Watch employees to see if they’re practicing what you preached!