

Implement Safe Work Practices to Reduce Risk of Worker Injuries

Caution: Do not be lulled into a false sense of security with a “one-and-done” assessment of hazards.



To understand required safe work practices, safety practitioners, leadership, and employees need a clear understanding of the current exposures, controls, and the risks they may encounter. These practices may be common and repeated, but they may also be dynamic, as in businesses operating in temporary workplaces, using different in-process resources, supplying new equipment, and many others.

This document provides general guidance, primarily around fixed position and powered equipment.

Definitions ¹

- **Controls:** General measures used to regulate safety and operational effectiveness.
- **Hazard:** A condition, set of circumstances or inherent property that can cause injury, illness or death.
- **Risk:** An estimate of the likelihood of a hazardous event or exposure(s), and the severity of injury or illness that may result.



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Hazard Identification

Luck and guesswork are not foundation blocks for an effective safety management strategy. To help prevent minor or severe injuries to employees' hands, arms, torsos, eyes, legs, and other body parts, a clear understanding of the hazards' presence to employees is essential.

Hazards take many forms; they may be mechanical or non-mechanical.

Mechanical hazards exist where the machine's parts move. This motion, according to OSHA, can be a part of the:²

- Point of operation: where the work of the machine happens;
- Power transmission apparatus: those parts that transmit the energy to the part of the machine doing the work which could be connecting rods, transmission lines, spindles, gears, and other;
- Other moving parts: these include reciprocating, rotating, feed mechanisms, and auxiliary parts

Non-mechanical hazards exist away from the machine's moving parts. Non-mechanical hazards can include:¹

- Electrical power sources;
- Low/high-pressure systems;
- Noise from unwanted sound;
- Byproducts created by heating, cutting, cleaning, coating, etc.;
- Compression/springs; and
- Flying objects, which could lead to injurious contact with eyes and other body parts

A recommended work practice is to read, understand, and follow the equipment manufacturer's maintenance and user manuals at a minimum. If you do not have the manufacturer's manuals, try to get a copy.

Job hazard analysis (JHA) is a hazard identification technique for assessing hazards associated with job tasks. It is only one of many ways to analyze exposures and controls. If you need help with creating a JHA, Nationwide offers a technical bulletin on the JHA process. Get your copy [here](#).

Managing the Process

Developing safe work practices takes knowledge and work. It's not hard, but it does require time and planning. When you involve others in developing safe work practices, you allow them to participate in their hazard awareness and safety. When engaging employees in building out safe work practices, there is a greater likelihood they will help build in ease of use and increase their perception of the risk. These two aspects; ease and perception, may go a long way in gaining employee buy-in, which may translate into a safer workplace than without buy-in.

² OSHA Publication 3067

Summary

Safe work practices augment other safety features like lighting levels, machine guarding, slip-resistant flooring, and many others. They support safe behavior or practices in your operations through the clarity of knowing the hazards and the adequacy of controls. Use these to build written work practice expectations, train your employees to these expectations, and then audit your expected work practices to ensure their usage and effectiveness to promote safe behaviors.



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