

# TOOLBOX TALK



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All management, staff and workers must receive regular WHS training. They must be provided with information, training, instruction or supervision so they can carry out their work safely. There are also certain safety training requirements, including training first aid, emergency evacuation procedures, risk assessments, manual handling and the handling of hazardous materials.

Worker WHS training should include whatever knowledge and skills are needed for them to work safely. They should receive training:

- During induction (ie, when they are new or starting a new job)
- Prior to commencing hazardous tasks they have not previously done
- Regularly as updates.

#### What is a toolbox talk?

A toolbox talk is a short presentation or discussion, usually 15 minutes or less, with a group of workers about a specific health and safety topic. Generally, they focus on one point and are a great way to complement and cement knowledge gained from more formal training. They are a great way to promote a safety culture within a workplace.

Keeping it short is very important as you don't want people's attention to wander. They can be done at the beginning of the day before everyone starts work, at lunchtime or added onto a regular staff meeting. Remember though, they aren't a substitute for formal training or onsite training that is required, but a way to reinforce it.

#### Why are they important?

They are important as they keep health and safety at the forefront of every worker's mind. I know what many of you are thinking right about now, 'what a pain we have to do this too', but there are many benefits to having these.

First, they reduce workplace accidents and injuries. Second, this has a flow on effect to improving morale and increasing productivity, because workers feel more valued and satisfied in doing their job, as they are being kept up to speed and have an opportunity for communication.

Third, toolbox talks save you money. If you could avoid having to change rosters and reorganise jobs because someone is off work that would save you both time and money. Let's think about other costs you could save. No costs from cleaning up where an incident has taken place or repairing it. No lost income from knocking back jobs because you don't have the staff available. No increased costs from increased insurance premiums, and of course, no costs from having to pay fines for non-compliance. Then also think about all that paperwork you'll have to complete in reporting the incident and then the return-to-work program. So, a 15-minute talk is suddenly looking really easy!

Finally, toolbox talks are an easy way to show your commitment to health and safety.

#### How do I get started?

1. Pick a topic (more about that later in this article)
2. Ask someone to run it. Usually this is a senior or experienced member of staff. Ideally, someone who has a good understanding of the topic.
3. Give them guidance. Keep the talk to 15 minutes and be specific about what should be included in the topic. Keep it to one part of the topic if it is a big one.
4. Sort out your presentation. Will you need handouts? Do you have a video to show? Do you need equipment?
5. Pick a time to run the toolbox talk. Ideally, these should be done weekly or fortnightly, so keeping it to the same time is helpful.

6. Invite others. Keep the group of workers small, about 10 is ideal. That allows for more communications from both sides. Make sure the topic is relevant to the people who are attending ie, office staff may not need to know about how to properly put on gauntlets.
7. Keep a record. Record the topic, who attended and if there are any action points coming out of it.

#### What sort of topics can I include?

The short answer is anything!

Think of all the areas of hazards there are that you'd like to prevent injuries from. Here are just a few to get you started: slips, trips and falls, cuts and lacerations, working at heights, ladder safety, electrical safety, hazardous substances, fire safety, manual handling, mental health, environmental and of course, PPE. You could also think of topics relating to more administrative type things such as reporting accidents in the workplace, evacuation procedures and housekeeping.

#### After I have finished the talk is there anything else I need to do?

It is a good idea to record the fact that you did the toolbox talk. This just means that you pass around an attendance sheet at the talk and include some details about what you covered, for example the date, the topic, main points covered and any action items.

#### AGWA can help

If you still aren't sure how to get started, AGWA can help you. On our Member website we have a whole section of templates to help you with this and other safety requirements. Go to AGWA/Members/Technical Resources/Safety Documents. There you will find two templates. The first is a Template for Toolbox Talks (Template 2c). It gives you the outline and guides you as to what to include. The other template is Record of Toolbox Talks (Template 2d) which gives you the document you can use as a sign off sheet. Both are downloadable and you can fill it in for your business. Take some time and have a look at the Safety Documents Section, as there is a lot more available for you to use for your business.

If you still feel unsure about how to get started, AGWA has prepared a sample Toolbox talk on PPE. If you would like a copy, please contact [training@agwa.com.au](mailto:training@agwa.com.au).



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