

# TAILGATE SAFETY MEETINGS

## General Information

*A quick and easy way to disseminate safety information to employees*

**Tailgate Safety Meetings**, tailgate safety talks or “toolbox talks” are informal “at-the-jobsite” discussions with employees about safety issues. The purpose of these meetings is to keep employees informed about workplace hazards, work-related accidents and illnesses. The tailgate format allows supervisors to draw on the experiences of workers and use their experience to remind all employees, particularly newer ones, on the dangers of specific processes, tools, equipment or materials. The goal is to get employees to think about safety and the safe way to do the job. Tailgate meetings should address real safety issues workers face on the job. They should be held periodically and on an as-needed basis.

OSHA (29 CFR 1926.21) requires that employers instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to the work environment to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury. A tailgate safety meeting can be a very efficient way to meet this OSHA requirement.

### **Prepare**

#### Preparing for the Tailgate Safety Meeting

- Carefully choose your topics, make them ones that directly relate to your projects and site tasks
- Choose a topic that needs safety review
- Observe hazardous conditions at the workplace such as potential hazards and/or worker carelessness
- Make an outline of three to five main safety points for your meeting
- Have a “theme” or “punchline” that sums up the topic and is easy to remember
- Review your material before discussing it with employees
- Determine the amount of information to be presented in time frame allotted
- Make sure supervisors who will conduct tailgates are trained to conduct and lead these meetings

### **Timing**

#### When is a Good Time to Conduct Tailgate Safety Training

- When a specific task has not been performed for awhile
- When new employees join a crew
- When the job site poses specific hazards
- When procedures or conditions on the job change
- After a “near-miss” incident
- To review an accident

### **Resources**

#### Discussion Topics and Resources for Topics

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- Make topics relevant and timely
- Review findings from safety inspections including corrective actions
- Discuss accidents and near misses including what happened and where, and preventive measures
- Review information from equipment manuals and Material Safety Data Sheets (if applicable)

### Conduct

#### How to Conduct an Effective Tailgate Safety Meeting

- Hold meetings at the start of shift or after break; the best time is before the work day begins
- Find a location where workers can sit or relax
- Keep meetings brief – 10 to 15 minutes max
- Most effective when conducted by the first-line or immediate supervisor
- Keep it short and informal
- Be clear and concise
- Grab listeners' attention and maintain their interest
- Encourage employee participation; ask questions, ask for comments, ideas, constructive criticism
- Provide handouts about the topic to those in attendance at the tailgate meeting
- Limit meeting to just a few key points
- Have an employee read the handout aloud while others follow along
- Facilitate open discussion after reading of the topic
- Emphasize how the weekly topic applies to the specific job site
- Prior to ending the tailgate meeting, have employees sign a dated attendance roster
- End the tailgate safety meeting with a recap of the main safety points

### Documentation

#### Document Attendance and Provide Relevant Information

- Provide handouts on the meeting topic
- Maintain attendance roster for each meeting, have employees sign
- Create a meeting report and submit to office/headquarters
- Keep a log for each employee listing training they received and dates of meetings attended

### After the Meeting

#### Maintaining the Momentum

- Onsite reminder program; use visual aids such as posters
- Customize visuals to specific jobs and safety issues

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#### **Follow Up**

Follow up with Employee Concerns

- Seek immediate feedback from the crew at conclusion of the meeting
- If any safety issues were introduced at a prior meeting, follow up is needed to see if progress was made, corrective action taken, etc.
- Progress should always be reported at the next meeting

A successful tailgate meeting needs to be well planned, timed and executed. It must engage all the workers and provide relevant information for the hazards that will be faced that day.

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### Meeting Leader's "What to do"

Be sure to limit the meeting to a single topic. Conduct the meeting in 15 minutes.

1. Use Checklist to inspect the job site for hazards related to your topic
  - a. Refer to your sample Safety Walkaround-Inspection Checklist
2. Prepare for the Tailgate meeting
  - a. Review the General Information section of this guide
  - b. Know your topic
  - c. Know relevant company policies and standards or regulations pertaining to your meeting topic
  - d. Anticipate questions employees may ask
  - e. Decide on topic theme, slogan or "punchline" to spark interest
3. Conduct the meeting
  - a. Open meeting with the topic theme, slogan or "punchline"
  - b. Read brief introduction to topic
  - c. Ask employees questions
  - d. Facilitate discussion among employees
  - e. Provide examples, suggestions, ideas from your own personal experience
  - f. Review information noted on checklist
  - g. Summarize main points
  - h. Ask for employee feedback
  - i. Solicit volunteer for assisting with next meeting -- choose topic, do walkaround, help lead meeting
4. Document the meeting
  - a. Have employees sign the roster
  - b. Prepare/submit report to safety office/headquarters

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### Tips for Getting Employees Involved

#### **Questions**

Ask questions, don't lecture employees. Ask employees a question to introduce each new point you want to make. After the question, allow time for them to think. Don't answer the questions for them; call on a volunteer to answer. Use the answer(s) to stimulate further discussion of the topic.

Be sure to always answer the four key questions for each work assignment. Identify the:

1. Error likely situations
2. Critical steps and by whom
3. Worst thing that can happen
4. Defenses in place.

#### **Personal Experience**

If you do not get an immediate answer to your question, try rephrasing the question. Try and make it more direct and personal, less abstract. Ask if anyone has had a personal experience that can help the team figure out the answer. For example, suppose no one has an answer for the question, "what are the health effects of breathing asbestos?" A more personal approach would be to ask, "do you know of anyone who got sick from working with asbestos?" What kind of symptoms/illness did they have?

#### **Time Limitations**

Since the recommended maximum time for a tailgate meeting is 15 minutes and you do want to encourage employee participation, you will also have to monitor how much time any one person speaks. If someone is talking too much, move the meeting along by asking for comments from others. Be tactful. Thank person A by name for his comments and move on to the next person for his input.

#### **Don'ts**

Don't make fun of anyone for asking or answering any questions. Don't fake it if you don't know an answer. Let them know you will find out and get back to them. Make sure you follow up and get back to them with the answer in a timely manner.

#### **Topic**

Always stay on topic. Remember you have 15 minutes to run an effective tailgate meeting. Let employees know that any concerns brought up that are not about today's topic can be addressed later during a personal conversation or at another safety meeting.