



008: Are You a Qualified Employee?

Background

Many injuries happen because people performing a certain task make errors that proper training would have prevented. Too many people misapply the phrase “qualified employee.” This has nothing to do with how smart you are, what trade you are in, whose payroll you are on, or whether you are authorized to be in a given area of a facility. The phrase applies to specific tasks.

Examples of misapplications

A Master Electrician energizes a control circuit, despite not understanding the process. This causes the release of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere.

A foreman asks, “Can you take a look at some Medium Voltage Switchgear for us?” An electrician trained only in low voltage operations throws the breaker under full load. The result is an arc blast that kills three people.

An electrician who is certified to operate a particular model of scissor lift obtains a bucket truck for a particular job. He takes all the precautions that apply to the scissor lift, but he extends the bucket too far laterally and tips over the entire apparatus from 30 feet up.

In these examples, each person is highly qualified. But, he is not qualified for the task at hand. That is the key concept to understand. In no case is someone from a trade other than the electrical trade qualified to do electrical work. An apprentice or journeyman who has not received formal training in a particular task may be considered a qualified employee for that task if working under the direct supervision of a person who has completed the necessary training to be a qualified employee.

You may be a “qualified employee” if

- You have up-to-date formal training in the hazards and precautions involved in a specific type of task and in the equipment used to complete it.
- You understand the hazards and precautions involved in a specific type of task or operation and in the equipment used to complete it.
- You have up-to-date formal training in the emergency procedures specific to the job at hand and to the equipment used to complete it.
- You understand the emergency procedures specific to the job at hand and to the equipment used to complete it.
- You know how to identify, lock out, and tag out energy sources particular to the task.
- You know how to verify de-energization of a given circuit, breaker, or equipment being worked with the appropriate measurement device.
- You know the approach distances, PPE requirements, grounding requirements, and insulating requirements for a given piece of equipment.
- You know the decision-making process for determining the extent of potential hazards and you can do the planning necessary to do the job safely.

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Think of an example, from the job at hand or from your own experience, where a particular task is dangerous for an unqualified person to do. Explain this example during the discussion session.

What this Safety Talk covers:

The meanings and implications of the phrase “qualified employee.”

Discussion notes :

