



# Introduction and Instructions for Discussion Leaders

## *Key concepts*

- Safety is cost-effective. Unsafe work practices cost companies money and can easily result in the loss of a contract.
- The investment in wages for a crew to meet for safety training is significant. Your preparation for that training will determine the return on your company's investment, and may just save the life of someone present at your meeting.
- Don't think of this as a lecture. Think of this as a way to help others work more safely. Invite participation and comment, as time permits.
- Safety is everybody's job.
- Many safety concepts are similar to, or even repetitious of, other concepts.
- Safety is a way of being, not a set of rules. One of your goals is to develop this way of being in your crew.

## *Communication*

This is a critical element for success. You can enhance the communication if you:

- Understand that each of these sessions requires preparation. Going in cold or quickly looking at the material at the last minute cheats your crew by undermining your ability to do a good job for them.
- Fulfill the discussion leader duties before the session. If you don't have, and can't get, the necessary materials, examples can help fill the void.
- Cite short examples from your own experience, and/or asking for examples from crew members, as appropriate.
- Understand that you don't need to rehearse your presentation, be a polished speaker, or provide overhead slides. Anyone whose job involves instructing or directing others can give one of these talks.
- Involve crew members in demonstrations and in answering questions other crew members have.
- Reinforce the training by noticing unsafe work practices on the job and asking people to think of how they might do the job more safely.
- Reinforce the training by noticing safe work practices on the job. At the next toolbox talk, mention a practice you observed and name the person doing it.
- Consider assigning one of the toolbox talks to each crew member, so everyone takes a turn presenting safety information.

## *Important*

Treat this as a project deliverable. The procedure on the next page will help you do that.

### *Purpose:*

This document provides you with the essential background for conducting an effective toolbox talk safety meeting.

### *Notes:*

## ***Procedure***

Here are the steps you need to take for each toolbox talk, to ensure each one is successful. These steps assume you are conducting a weekly meeting.

- Review the upcoming toolbox talk ahead of time. If you are giving it on a Monday, review it the Tuesday before, so you can start preparations.
- Assemble any needed materials and fulfill any outside duties by the preceding workday, if not sooner. This includes ensuring you have enough evaluation forms for each participant.
- Start on time.
- Begin each meeting with a quick recap of the previous topic, unless this is the first meeting.
- When presenting, you can choose to simply read through the safety talk or use it as a reference while covering the topic.
- Pause after covering each of the bullet points under each heading, and ask if anyone has questions.
- Pass the evaluation sheets out after the meeting. You do not want people distracted by writing on a sheet, when they should be listening and participating in the discussion and demonstrations.
- Stop the presentation and demonstration part on time, so the meeting does not run over. If people still have questions, ask them to write the questions on their evaluation form.
- Build time into the meeting for people to fill in the evaluation form at the end.
- Review the evaluation forms, within a day or two of the meeting, so you can take the necessary action, if any, in a timely manner.
- File the evaluation forms per your company safety training policy.

## ***Answering “overflow” questions***

You may have more questions than time, and you may have new questions on the evaluation forms. You should answer all of these questions. But, do not crowd the topic of one toolbox talk by answering questions from the last one. Never answer a question without providing that answer to the entire group. If one person asks, others probably should have asked. Answer any “overflow” questions, such as those on evaluation forms, by one of several methods:

- Do a “Part 2” of the same topic as your next meeting
- Hold a short interim meeting specifically for addressing that question.
- Provide workers with photocopies of relevant articles, policies, procedures, or other reference materials that answer the questions.