

## Tailgate talks

### What are Tailgate/safety talks?

Safety talks are short safety messages for the members of a work crew before work begins. These talks can be as short as a few minutes or longer than 20 minutes. On average, they are in the range of 5 or 10 minutes long in duration. The talks can cover a range of topics or just a single focal point.

### Why are these safety talks delivered?

Safety talks are held for several reasons.

- To keep health and safety knowledge refreshed
- To stay alert
- To get health and safety in the conversation
- To raise awareness
- To grow a positive health and safety culture

If such context is not discussed appropriately it may lead to workplace injury. Safety talks are a set of guidelines that develop safety-first culture and prevent any negative incident at the workplace.

### Topics to be discussed or what to talk about?

Some general questions you can ask yourself to narrow in on some topics:

- What training needs to be reinforced?
- What problems have we been having lately?
- What are common injuries in this line of work?
- What have our near misses been a result of?
- What trends are occurring in the workplace?

There are many other guidelines you can use to determine what topics or topics you should cover. For example, some specific hazards that may be involved in the work procedure and PPEs required to perform such tasks, proper usage of such PPEs, Any precautions that need to be followed, etc. Keep topics useful, relevant, and timely.

### Who should deliver the safety talks?

The person directing the work should be responsible for conducting or leading the safety talk. The reason for having the individual who is directing the work lead the talk is to show support for the message and efforts to work safely.



Do not be afraid to offer employees the chance to present at a meeting. While most employees would never choose to present a topic, you may be surprised to find that many would if given the chance.

#### How often should such talks be held?

There is no short and dry answer to how often safety talks should be conducted. Safety talks can be conducted on a timely basis (on regular intervals like before starting the work or weekly or monthly basis) and also on the basis of the situation. E.g., while handling a new piece of equipment the handler shall be guided by the professional, both verbally and practically by demonstrating the usage and explaining the positive and negative situations faces by its usage. Such talks could be delivered on-site as well as off-site.

As mentioned earlier, these talks do not have to be extremely long. A lot of value can be added in a short amount of time if the talks are completed often. Employees are more likely to take more away from these talks if they are shorter but more frequent than longer meetings that occur infrequently.

#### Where should safety talks be conducted?

These talks could be held at the site of the work or away from the site whichever situation is suitable. Sometimes discussion related to the glimpse of the workplace and then detailing the content on the site is also possible.

This should only be done if the work area is comfortable, safe, and convenient for all involved in the talk. Conducting the talk in the work area itself can help employees visualize the information being conveyed, as well as allow the presenter to point out specific examples of what they are discussing.

If holding it in the work area is not an option, pictures or maps of the worksite can be great tools so that employees can visualize what is being said.

#### Things to be practiced for better safety talks:

There are many things you can do to hold a better meeting -

- Prepare ahead of time.
- Keep topics relevant and timely to the audience.
- Only take the time necessary to cover the topic; do not drag it out.
- Do not read the talk word for word from the paper.
- Get the audience involved by asking for stories or examples relating to the topic.
- Also, encourage the participants to ask more questions that will result in greater exposure related to the topic being discussed.
- Use visual aids as needed to help get your message across.
- Have fun- don't take yourself so seriously!



### What does OHSA state about tailgate talks?

While OHSA does not specifically require a company to hold safety talks or toolbox talks in any of their standards, doing so can play a part in helping to ensure compliance with some standards. For example, OHSA requires that employers make employees aware of the hazards of their work and how to eliminate them.

One specific example of this is found in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, under 25(2)(a), which states that the employer shall provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker.

Also, safety talks are meant for delivering precautionary measures and as per section 25(2)(h) of the OHSA, which states about every reasonable precaution taken by the employer for worker's safety, safety talks are one of the sources for such measures to ensure worker's safety.

While training will be a large part of ensuring compliance with this specific regulation, safety toolbox talks are also a way to help to ensure compliance. These talks need to have the correct documentation to do so.

### Documentation of the safety talks-

Without documenting these efforts, there is no actual proof they were done. A lack of documentation can be problematic. Recording such minutes related to such toolbox talks ensures the employer's duty toward worker's safety and built the image of the workplace on a positive end.

Every time a talk is conducted, a sign-in sheet should be completed by the presenter and signed by everyone present for the meeting. Some guidelines for documentation:

- Include the date and time.
- Include the presenter(s) name(s).
- Have everyone sign the sheet.
- Be detailed about what topics were discussed.
- Attach any materials used for the talk to the sign-in sheet.
- File documentation in chronological order so they can be easily found to be reviewed if needed.

Contact for assistance:

Health and Safety Department at [safety@flemingcollege.ca](mailto:safety@flemingcollege.ca)



