

LESSON 9

Putting Work Safety into Practice



Description:

Students practice the basic skills needed to address workplace safety issues through a role-play exercise. They also identify barriers and solutions to overcoming challenges when addressing safety concerns in the workplace.

Learner Outcomes:

Students will be able to do the following:

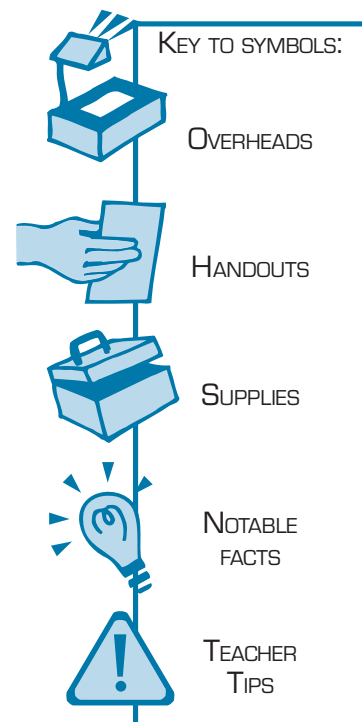
1. Describe the steps that are helpful in resolving workplace safety issues.
2. Demonstrate these steps effectively in resolving workplace safety issues.
3. Perceive the importance of addressing unsafe work issues with their employers.
4. Apply these steps to real-life work situations.

Key Concepts:

1. Every worker has the right and responsibility to address safety concerns in the workplace.
2. An employer does not have the legal right to fire an employee, if the employee refuses to work in a situation in which danger is imminent.
3. Employees can take basic steps to address unsafe work conditions.
4. Workplace safety can be achieved through cooperative problem-solving.

Fact:

Sixty percent of people suffer from back pain over the course of their lifetime. At least 4% are incapacitated for at least six months. According to the National Safety Council, lower back pain accounts for 400,000 work-related injuries each year in the United States.¹



Materials

Needed:

- Overhead 8.2
- “Role-play Scenarios”
- Scissors
- “Role-play Scenarios Worksheet” (one per student)
- “Performance Criteria and Checklist” found in Lesson 6 (one per student)
- “Putting Work Safety Into Practice, In-Class Assignment” (one per student)

Preparation Needed:

1. Read through the S.A.F.E. steps (from Lesson 8) again, so you can discuss each step briefly. These steps help workers when addressing workplace safety issues.
2. Think through the responses you will give as the employer in each role-play.
3. Copy the role-play scenarios and cut them apart. Make copies of the “Role-play Scenarios Worksheet.”
4. Make some extra copies of the role-play scenarios, in case students need to use them for their in-class writing assignment.

Directions:

Workplace Safety Role-play (35 minutes)

1. Explain:
During our last class, we talked about the S.A.F.E. steps you can take to address workplace safety issues. What were these steps?
2. Place overhead 8.2 on the overhead projector but keep it covered with a sheet of paper as you begin this review. As students list the steps, uncover them on the overhead. Briefly discuss each step as it is mentioned. The steps are as follows:

S = SEE the safety issue.

A = ASK the right person for help.

F = FIND a solution.

E = EMPHASIZE the positive.

Briefly review some examples of positive responses to workplace problems.

3. Say:
Today we are going to practice putting these S.A.F.E. steps into practice.
4. Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair one of the “Role-play Scenarios.” Some pairs may end up with the same scenario, depending upon the size of your class. Also give each person a copy of the “Role-play Scenarios Worksheet.”



OVERHEAD 8.2



“ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS”
AND “ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS
WORKSHEET”

5. Explain:

I would like each pair to imagine you are coworkers. You are both trying to figure out how to deal with an unsafe work situation. Begin your discussion of the situation by filling out this worksheet. Decide what the safety issue is and the various options you have for dealing with the situation.

Then think through how you will choose an option. Maybe you would suggest a solution that would be the safest choice. Maybe you would suggest the least expensive solution. Decide for yourself how you will pick one option over another. For this exercise, the only option you **cannot** pick is to quit. Each of you will hand in your worksheet at the end of the class period. Discuss the situation together, but fill out your sheet individually.

Once you have decided what you should do about the situation, walk through the S.A.F.E. steps and talk about how you would address the problem with your employer. Practice a brief conversation you both would have with your employer to resolve the issue. Each pair will act out their role-play, while I or other students play the role of your employer. As the employer, I or we may be concerned, unconcerned, angry, or annoyed. Do your best to deal with the situation as it arises.

6. Allow groups about seven minutes to discuss their scenarios, fill in their worksheets, and come up with conversations.

7. Explain:

While you are waiting to do your role-play with me, I want you to do an in-class assignment that is due at the end of the class period.

Pass out the homework assignment handout. Read through the handout and answer any questions students may have.

Students can chose to write about a real life example, if they have one, or use information from situations discussed in the class sessions. The student essays should thoroughly describe the safety situation and how the student would apply the S.A.F.E. steps to that situation. The essays should also describe the type of opposition being faced, and how they would deal with this opposition.

TEACHER TIP:

Other ways to do this exercise:

1. Have one pair act out their role-play with you in front of the whole class.
2. Have two pairs take turns role-playing for each other. Do the role-plays a couple of times with different employer responses.



“PUTTING WORK SAFETY INTO PRACTICE, IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT”

8. When all the pairs are ready, ask each pair to meet with you one at a time. Set up chairs at the front of the room, so the three of you can meet. You will be playing the role of their employer, while they play the role of your employees. Each pair should **briefly** role-play their conversation with you. As the employer, you will be responding to the pair's concerns. After each pair is done, have a brief discussion about how they handled the situation.
9. After all the groups are done, briefly discuss students' experiences with this exercise. Possible discussion questions:
 - Was this exercise easy or difficult? Remind students that all such conflicts may be difficult.
 - Would you do anything differently next time?

Real-Life Workplace Safety Issues

(15 minutes)

1. Explain:

If you had to address an unsafe workplace situation, how would you use the S.A.F.E. steps and material from the previous class lessons? I would like you to talk about specific work situations you have experienced.
2. Ask for volunteers to discuss specific work situations they have experienced. If you assigned the in-class assignment, have students read their essays. Talk about each situation and how they could have used the S.A.F.E. steps. Discuss any barriers the students must address to resolve the unsafe working conditions. Go through as many examples as time allows. Have students turn in their in-class assignments, if you had them do this exercise in writing.
3. Explain:

Every worker has the right and responsibility to address safety concerns in the workplace. In most cases, your employer will respond positively to your suggestions. Employers benefit when employees are safe too. Less injuries mean less time lost on the job and less money spent for medical expenses.

It is important to remember that an employer does not have the legal right to fire you, if you bring up safety issues at work. You have the right to work in a safe workplace.

You are also responsible for being safe at work. I hope you will put all you have learned about worker safety into practice. I hope you will all do as much as you can to work safe and work smart.
4. After this session, fill out the "Performance Criteria and Checklist" (found in Lesson 6) for each student based on the quality of their work in completing the tasks outlined on the form. These tasks and criteria apply to most activities in Lessons 6 through 9.

Role-play Scenarios

Scenario # 1:

You work in a fast-food restaurant, and your employer asks you to stay until closing on many nights. You do not get home until midnight and must get up for school by 6 a.m. the next day. You are very tired at school and work.

Yesterday, another employee at work was tired and in a hurry to go home. Because of this, he did not let the hot oil cool down enough before removing it, and he was burned. Other coworkers are also concerned about the hours they are asked to work.

Scenario # 2:

You work for a grain elevator in town. It is a very dusty work environment. You usually wear a respirator while you work, but today when you arrive, all the respirators are gone. Your supervisor asks you to work anyway, because the workload is really backed up. The job must get done today and cannot wait for the new order of respirators to arrive. Respirators can be purchased at a hardware store but are more expensive than when the company buys them in bulk.

Scenario # 3:

You work for a landscaping firm and often ride from site to site in a company truck. One of your coworkers, who is old enough to drive on the job, drives the truck. He is a very reckless driver and takes many chances when out of view of your supervisor. You feel very unsafe when riding with him.

Scenario # 4:

You are working on a local farm. The farmer has just started spraying pesticides on his fields, and he has asked you to handle the pesticide containers and sprayers. Neither of you received gloves or respirators or had any training.

The farmer is in a hurry to get the job done before it rains. Rain is expected throughout the remainder of the week. If you ask for gloves and respirators, the farmer will have to go buy these supplies. You could lose several hours of work time.

Scenario # 5:

Both of you work at a local convenience store. Your supervisor has just decided to make each of you take turns working alone in the store in the evenings. This decision makes both of you very nervous. Someone could rob you or assault you, and no one would know. Since your employer trusts you, she specifically wants you both to work the evening shift but doesn't want to have more than one employee working at one time.

Scenario # 6:

You are working as health assistants at a local hospital. You work closely with one of the nursing staff there. She is always in a hurry and asks you to take a lot of risks when working with patients, such as not wearing gloves and handling used needles very carelessly.

Whenever you make suggestions or question her judgment, she brushes you both off and says you do not know anything. You are only teenagers.

Scenario # 7:

You just got summer jobs mowing alongside county roads. Your supervisor asks you both to mow a hillside with a very steep embankment. You notice the tractors have no rollover protection.

Several teenagers applied for these jobs, because they pay very well. Your supervisor chose you both on a trial basis to see if you could handle the job.

Scenario # 8:

You got a job detasseling corn. You work very long hours. On some days, it is incredibly hot work. Your employer is not around very much. She has not supplied you with water or shade, bathroom facilities, or a vehicle to ride in, if someone should get sick or injured.

Name: _____

Class Period: _____

Role-play Scenarios Worksheet

Question # 1: What is the safety hazard in this situation?

Question # 2: Who should you talk to about this situation?

Question # 3: Are there any laws that would protect you in this situation?

Question # 4: List at least three options for handling this situation?

Question # 5: What do you think is the best option?

Question # 6: Who else might help you deal with this safety or health concern?

Now use the S.A.F.E. steps on the overhead to help you prepare for your role-play presentation.

Name: _____ Class Period: _____



Putting Work Safety Into Practice In-Class Assignment

Write a one- to two-page essay about a safety hazard you've experienced at work or learned about in one of the previous lessons. How would you argue for correction of the hazard, if your employer voiced one of the following objections?

1. I can't afford to make the safety changes.
2. The safety changes will make the job go slower and time is money.
3. We've always done it that way here and nobody has ever gotten hurt. Why should we change?

Use the S.A.F.E. strategies and materials from prior lessons to make your case.