Safety Talk

Jobsite Respiratory Safety and Risk Management

PRESENTED BY:

MEETING START TIME:

DATE OF MEETING:

MEETING END TIME:

Keep the Conversation Going with a Safety Talk Question:

What are we doing on this jobsite to recognize and manage air quality concerns?

Why Jobsite Respiratory Safety Matters

Jobsite respiratory safety is a critical component of overall construction site safety. Many common construction activities generate airborne contaminants such as dust, fumes, gases, and vapors that can pose serious health risks if not properly managed.

Exposure to these airborne hazards can lead to a range of health effects, from short-term irritation to long-term respiratory disease or permanent lung damage. By prioritizing jobsite respiratory safety, organizations help protect worker health, reduce illness-related absences, and maintain productivity across the workforce.

Effective prevention depends on awareness, consistent best practices, and shared responsibility across all levels of the organization.

Common Respiratory Hazards on the Jobsite

Construction jobsites may expose workers to a variety of airborne contaminants, including silica dust, carbon monoxide, asbestos fibers, lead particles, solvent vapors, and welding fumes. Understanding which hazards are present in your specific work environment is the first step toward improving jobsite respiratory safety.

Best Practices for Jobsite Respiratory Safety

- **Hazard Identification:** Workers should become familiar with common airborne contaminants associated with their tasks and jobsite conditions. Knowing what hazards exist allows teams to take proactive steps to reduce exposure before work begins.
- **Jobsite Hazard Assessment:** Before starting work, conduct documented jobsite inspections to identify potential respiratory hazards, measure exposure levels, and determine whether engineering controls or personal protective equipment (PPE) are required.
- **Controlling Hazards at the Source:** Whenever possible, reduce exposure before relying on PPE. Examples include local exhaust ventilation, wet-cutting techniques to suppress silica dust, and regular housekeeping to minimize airborne dust.
- **Respiratory Protection and PPE:** When engineering and administrative controls are not sufficient, appropriate respiratory PPE must be used. This may include disposable or reusable respirators, masks, or self-contained breathing apparatuses. All respiratory protection should be NIOSH-approved, which provides useful fact sheets.
- **PPE Maintenance and Storage:** Reusable respiratory PPE should be inspected before each use and maintained according to manufacturer instructions and OSHA guidelines.

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- **Organizational and Administrative Controls:** Limit unnecessary exposure by restricting hazardous tasks to essential personnel and controlling access to high-risk areas.
- **Monitoring and Exposure Limits:** Workers should follow OSHA permissible exposure limits and continuously monitor jobsite conditions. For example, OSHA limits lead exposure to 50 micrograms per cubic meter over an eight-hour time-weighted average.
- **Reporting Unsafe Conditions:** Unsafe conditions or potential exposures should be reported immediately. Prompt reporting helps prevent injuries and reinforces jobsite respiratory safety.
- **Training and Awareness:** Ongoing training ensures workers understand respiratory hazards, proper PPE use, equipment limitations, and emergency response procedures. Workers should also be familiar with their organization's Respiratory Protection Program, if applicable.

Supporting Jobsite Respiratory Safety Through Strong Programs

Many organizations maintain a formal Respiratory Protection Program to help meet OSHA requirements and promote consistent safety practices. A well designed RPP establishes clear expectations, reinforces accountability, and helps create a safer work environment for everyone on the jobsite.

We're Here to Help – Contact Our Loss Control Consultants Today

At Great American Insurance Group, we strive to ensure that our policyholders are not only aware of the hazards they face but are equipped with the necessary tools to prevent and combat them as effectively as possible. Interested in learning more? Talk to our team of experts.

For additional information on improving your organization's safety and security, visit the Plan & Protect Hub.

Respiratory Risk Sources:

https://www.osha.gov/common-respiratory-illnesses/general-recommendations
https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2022-102/default.html

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Worker Comments / Feedback:

To be signed by all employees, contract workers, clients and others who participated in the safety talk prior to commencing work.

Signatures:

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