

Training and supervision



Why are training and supervision important?

People are most likely to be injured at work when doing unfamiliar tasks. They may be in this situation because they are new employees, because work processes have changed, or because they have moved to a new work area. The only way to reduce these risks is to give good quality training, backed up with an appropriate level of supervision. Good training and supervision also helps foster a culture where safe and healthy practices become second nature to everyone, and can help your business avoid the emotional and financial costs associated with accidents and occupational ill health.

Who needs H&S Training?

As a boss:

- You do - Whether an employer or self-employed, are you sure you're up to date with how to identify the hazards and control the risks arising from your work?
- Your managers and supervisors do - They need to know what you expect from them in terms of health and safety, and how you expect them to deliver.
- Your employees do - Everyone who works for you, including self-employed people, needs to know how to work safely and without risks to health.

How do I know when training is needed?

As a boss:

The law says employees must be adequately trained in the use of all plant, objects, substances, protective clothing and equipment that they will, or may, have to deal with in the course of their work. In practice this means you should look for any situation

where someone is doing something, or using something, that they haven't usually done or used before. Ask yourself:

- *Do I have new employees?* Even if they have previously worked in the same industry, they will not be familiar with your workplace and may not be used to your machinery and equipment. **ALL** new staff, whether full or part-time, casual or permanent, need induction training to familiarise them with hazards, emergency procedures, and the ways things are done in your workplace. Those who are on site for work experience or job training also need induction training.
- *Do I have new equipment or processes?* Any change to the production process should include retraining for all who are or may be effected. This may be something as simple as changing one ingredient in a chemical process, installing a new machine, or buying a different type of hearing protection.

If substances are involved, consult the relevant material safety data sheets to see what is required, and for machinery or equipment look to the operating manual. Be sure to cover any changes to emergency and lockout/tag out procedures.
- *Have I moved staff to new work*

areas? Whether you are shifting staff for a few hours or days to cover production peaks and staff absences, moving one person into a new role, or operating a regular system of job rotation, everyone who changes tasks should receive training **before** starting work in the new area.

- *Do existing employees have skill gaps, or need refresher training?*

As an employee:

The law says employees must follow instructions, safe work practices and not do anything to endanger themselves or others. If you are asked to do a task, or work with a substance or piece of equipment that is new to you, you should ask for training. In some situations you may also need formal training for tasks you have been doing for some time. Ask yourself:

- *Do I know what to do if something goes wrong?*
- *Do I know how to deactivate the equipment and machinery I use so it cannot be accidentally restarted?*
- *Do I understand the hazards associated with my job, and how to control them?*
- *Do I know how to use, store and maintain my protective equipment and clothing?*

If you answer no to any of these questions, ask for training. Do not assume that experience or a qualification in a relevant field

removes the need for detailed, task-specific training.

Never attempt to do something that you have not been asked to do, even if you believe you are being helpful. There have been a number of serious accidents when people have taken it on themselves to try to fix faulty equipment or to help out in unfamiliar work areas at busy times.

Who should conduct the training session?

For both parties:

This will depend on the circumstances. If you have new equipment, for instance, the supplier will be the best person to provide training.

In other circumstances it may be appropriate to use a manager or experienced staff member as a trainer, but do ensure that those who train others have themselves been properly trained and are using correct procedures.

If the training involves a particularly complicated or hazardous procedure, it may be best to make use of a professional trainer or an approved course.

How do I get best value out of training?

As a boss:

- Take time to consider what information a trainee will need by undertaking a train-

LINKS

Want to know more?

- The ACC website has a number of pages on different aspects of training and supervision. For a general guide to training obligations go to www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/safe-at-work/worksafe/action/training-supervision/ or www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/safe-at-work/worksafe/action/hazard-management/people/training/
- For information about the training needs of new workers and young people: www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/safe-at-work/worksafe/action/hazard-management/people/new-employees/index.html#new_risk
- For information on training delivery and keeping records see: www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/safe-at-work/worksafe/action/training-supervision/training-delivery/
- An OSH/ACC guide to training and supervision for small businesses can be found at www.workinfo.govt.nz/documents/uploads/acc1106training.pdf

ing needs analysis. Telling him or her how to carry out the basic task is not enough.

- Think about your audience. If English is not their first language, plan to have a translator or provide diagrams to help them understand.
- Do not rush the session, and aim to avoid interruptions. Allow time for questions at the end.
- If the task is very complex or involves many steps, consider working through it one stage at a time, so as not to overload with information.
- Explain why the training is necessary, giving examples of what can go wrong if safety rules are not followed. If a trainee has worked with similar equipment before, ask them to tell you what they already know, rather than assuming prior knowledge.
- Discuss the available safety measures, including protective clothing and equipment, guards, emergency stops, etc, and demonstrate how they should be used.
- Describe how the machinery, activity or process works, including the location and operation of controls and how to stop and start it.
- Explain how each step of the task is carried out, taking care to avoid jargon or technical terms which could be misunderstood. Be sure to explain any terminology that is regularly used in the workplace, however.
- Explain how to recognise defects or malfunctions, and what to do if they occur.
- Demonstrate how to do each step of the process, then get the trainee to demonstrate the process to you, explaining what they are doing at each step. Correct any errors as they occur, but do not take over.
- Do not leave the trainee on his/her own until you are satisfied that they know what

they are doing and how to avoid injury.

- Ensure all trainees understand whom to ask for help if they have a problem, and stress that they should not try to find their own solutions.
- Provide step-by-step written instructions for trainees to refer back to.

Afterwards check that the training has worked by asking:

- Do your employees understand what is required?
- Do they now have the knowledge and skills needed to work safely and without risk to health?
- Are they actually working as trained?
- Has your organisation's health and safety performance improved?
- What feedback are you getting from line managers and trainees?
- Is further information and/or training needed?
- Was the most suitable training method used?
- What improvements can be made?
- Has there been a change in behaviour and practice?

Keep training records - including in-house training - and monitor them to ensure refresher training is given when needed.

As an employee:

- Don't assume you have all the answers. If you already know a lot about the task in question, tell your trainer so you can work together to identify any gaps in your knowledge.
- If you don't understand something, ask to have it explained.
- If you still feel uneasy about some parts of the task after training, ask to be supervised until you are more confident.
- Don't take shortcuts. There are good safety reasons for using the work methods you

have been taught, even if they are not always the quickest way to do things.

How do I know when supervision is needed?

For both parties:

Supervising is not intended to police the behaviour of a trainee, but to provide support until he or she is fully confident with the new situation.

After any training, an occasional follow-up is a good idea, to satisfy both parties that correct procedures are being used, the right safety precautions are being taken, and no unsafe shortcuts have been adopted. Tasks that are especially complex or hazardous will require more supervision,

however, perhaps by pairing the trainee with a competent colleague who knows (and uses) correct procedures. This staff member may benefit from re-training before taking on the responsibility.

As a rule of thumb, supervision should be available until the trainee feels confident to carry out the task alone, and is able to demonstrate competency to his or her supervisor. ■

This article is intended to provide only a broad overview of its topic. Our thanks to Patrick Seaman of Patrick Seaman Workplace Safety Ltd. Any errors, however, are Safeguard's.