

Toolbox Talks

Spotlight on Safety



Personal Inspection Checklist

Have you ever considered creating a personal inspection checklist for yourself? Every day before you start work you should inspect your safety equipment and tools to ensure that they are in good shape and you are ready to work safely. It is a matter of taking responsibility for your own safety.

Here's an example of what a personal inspection checklist should look like:

First, make sure you have your personal protective equipment and that it is in good shape.

1. Do you have your hard hat? Is the shell and suspension in good condition? Have you adjusted the suspension so that it fits properly, comfortably and will not fall off your head?
2. Do you have the type of eye protection that you will need for the type of work you will be performing? Remember, you need goggles and a face shield when working with chemicals.
3. Do you have your work gloves and are they the proper type for the work you will perform?
4. Do you have ear protection (earplugs or earmuffs) to protect your hearing from loud noises? Get a fresh pair of earplugs if yours are dirty and make sure you insert them as described on the package.
5. Do you need any other equipment such as rubber boots, rain gear, high visibility vest or jacket, etc.? It will not do you any good if you leave anything at home or in your truck.

Second, make sure you have the tools you need to perform your work and inspect them to ensure that they are in good condition.

1. Is your hammer handle cracked? If it is, it is time to get a new handle or hammer.
2. How about that shovel you intend to use today? Is the handle cracked or broken? Tell your supervisor if it is and get another one to use.
3. Are you using any electric power tools? If so, is the power cord frayed, loose or damaged? Does the electric plug have all the prongs that it requires or is that ground prong missing? If you are using a battery-powered tool, is the battery charged and do you have a spare battery handy?
4. Are you planning on using a ladder today? Inspect it before you use it, checking to make sure that the side rails and rungs are not cracked or broken.
5. Ladders with missing or damaged rungs should not be used, and they should be tagged defective. Don't forget to secure that extension ladder so it does not kick out from under you, fall backwards or slide sideways.
6. If you are going to be working in a trench, it should have a protective system to keep the walls from caving in on you. The trench walls should be sloped at the proper angle, shored to prevent cave-in, or a trench box installed. **Never** enter into an unprotected trench even, for a short time.
7. If you are going to enter into a confined space such as a manhole, vault or pipe, then you must have the proper training. If you have been trained, then you know the air inside the space must be tested before you enter, ventilation should be used, and if a permit is required, then you must follow the permit entry requirements.
8. Are you going to be working around heavy equipment? Remember to stay clear of the swing radius so you don't get hit in the head by the counter weight. Also stay out from under any overhead loads such as pipe being swung into the trench or excavator buckets full of dirt.

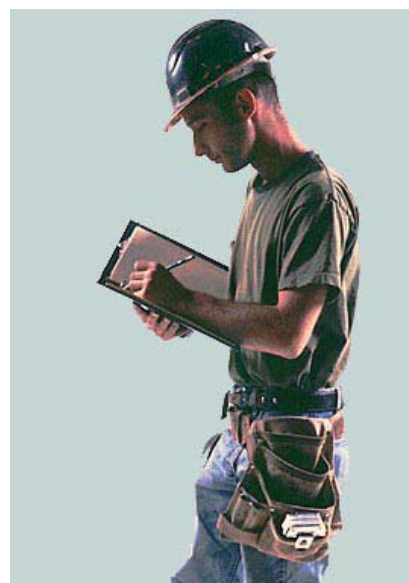


Photo courtesy of Des Moines Area Community College.

9. How about the rigging you intend to attach to that big heavy pipe that is about to be lifted into the trench? Is it the right size? Are you using the right type of hitch? Is the rigging frayed or otherwise damaged? Inspect slings and other rigging before each lift. If you are not sure, have the equipment operator or foreman check it.

In brief, if you have questions, need PPE or other safety equipment, or if you identify an unsafe tool or other unsafe condition, report it to your supervisor or foreman immediately. It could save you or a co-worker from serious injury.

Just as an athlete prepares for a game, you should prepare yourself for the work ahead. Always take the time before you start work to think about the equipment and tools you will be using and the safety equipment that you will need. Make a checklist or at least take mental note of what potential hazards the work shift might entail. It's your life and your body, so don't rely on someone else to protect it for you. And above all, don't take chances that will place you in a dangerous situation.

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