

Safety Corner

Common unsafe practices at worksites

There are certain unsafe acts that workers just accept as 'elephants in the room' without discussing them or challenging them. The following are the common 'elephants' that should be tackled:

No fall protection training and faulty equipment. Is fall protection training provided by employer on a regular basis for workers whose tasks involve the risk of falling from height? The training shall help workers identify fall-related hazards and the risk should be controlled with appropriate fall protection devices and equipment if such hazards cannot be eliminated or avoided. Fall protection devices must be inspected before each use by qualified personnel. They must also be inspected annually to ensure the devices are in proper working order.

Availability of personal protective equipment (PPE). Are PPE and safety equipment always available on the worksite? PPE, which should be the last resort if the related work hazards cannot be eliminated or controlled, can help protect employees from occupational hazards like falling objects, burns, dust, and head injuries.

Ladder safety. Are workers using ladders as working platform? Ladders should be used for access only, workers should always maintain a three-point contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing a ladder. A ladder platform must be used for work below 2m. All ladders should conform to applicable safety standards and be inspected for any damages or signs of wear and tear on the hinges, side rails, feet support, and steps.

Hazard communication. Are workers openly discussing safety hazards? Communication is key in preventing hazards. Employers should promote hazard communication through safety training, which will help educate workers to look for potential hazards. All workers should have access to safety training materials. This information must be in a language, or perhaps a format, that is easy to understand by all personnel.

Safety is everyone's responsibility and should be considered a priority in every worksite. Ignoring unsafe work practices is characteristic of a poor safety culture at a worksite.

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