

Worksite: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Topic C165: Distractions on the Job

**Introduction:** Many accidents and injuries occur when a worker is distracted while working. Following are safety guidelines to ensure that all workers are aware of the distractions that may occur while on the job, and how these distractions can be eliminated:

**Mental distractions:** Having a bad day at home and worrying about it at work is a hazardous combination. Dropping your 'mental' guard can pull your focus away from safe work procedures. You can be distracted when you are busy working and a friend comes by to talk while you are trying to work. Do not become a statistic because you took your eyes off the machine or the work "just for a minute."

**Inattention:** Inattention may be the result from workplace arguments, confusing instructions, concern about working hours, wages, bills, etc. Inattention worsens with fatigue and boredom. Keep your mind on your work. The prime interest in solving hazards created by inattention lies in methods of deference; warnings, alarms, fail-safe switch circuits, guards, etc.

**Machinery:** Set up your work station in a clear unobstructed location with good lighting, proper electrical circuits, and away from busy foot traffic that would cause distractions. Make sure that everyone is at a safe distance away from a machine before starting. Assure that your work station is stable and clear of trip hazards. Hands can be protected by using machinery that only turns when both hands are on the operator switches. Never by-pass the startup switch on the equipment you are using. When a machine does not start the way it was designed, inform your boss.

Do not play loud music.  
Headphones can be a hazardous distraction. Ask your supervisor if wearing headphones is acceptable.

**Hearing:** Do not play loud music. Headphones can be a hazardous distraction. Ask your supervisor if wearing headphones is acceptable. Ear muffs are for loud noise levels to safeguard your hearing. Workers need to hear when important instructions or warnings are told. A co-worker may save your life.

**Driving:** 4 out of every 5 accidents are the fault of the person involved in the incident. Unsafe acts cause four times as many accidents and injuries as unsafe conditions. Workers tend to look for "things" to blame when an accident happens, because it is easier than looking for "root causes". Avoid doing anything that will take any part of your immediate focus away from the task at hand: driving safely.

**Shortcuts:** Every day we make decisions we hope will make the job faster and more efficient. Do time savers ever risk their own safety, or that of other crew members? Short cuts that reduce your safety on the job are not shortcuts, but hazards.

**Overconfidence:** Confidence is a good thing. Overconfidence can be too much of a good thing. "It will never happen to me" is an attitude that can lead to improper procedures, mishandling of tools, or unsafe methods on the job. Any of these can lead to injury.

**Poor housekeeping:** When clients, managers, or safety professionals walk through your work site, housekeeping is an accurate indicator of everyone's attitude about quality, production, and safety. Poor housekeeping creates hazards of all types. A well-maintained area sets a standard for others to follow. Good housekeeping involves both pride and safety.

**Ignoring safety procedures:** Purposely failing to observe safety procedures can endanger you and your co-workers. You are being paid to follow the company safety policies; not to make your own rules. Remember, being "casual" about safety can lead to a casualty. Being hasty in starting a task or not thinking through the process can put you in harm's way. Plan your work and then work your plan.

**Problem solving:** Once you have realized a distraction problem, meet with the worker to discuss what you have seen. Meet at a time and place when you think you will be relaxed and able to discuss the problem. When distraction problems occur, it is especially important to speak with respect. Address the distraction problem and encourage improvement. Do not judge the worker. Be relaxed and maintain a nonjudgmental attitude; this will help keep the lines of communication open, solve the problem, and maintain good relations. Starting the conversation is often the most difficult step. You may feel unsure about what to say or how to say it, or you may find yourself wanting to avoid the discussion altogether. Be straightforward and honest.

**Conclusion:** Concentrate on the work at hand, and keep your mind on your work. Utilize these safety guidelines to help eliminate distractions on the job.

**Employee Attendance:** (Names or signatures of personnel who are attending this meeting)

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*These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.*