

Site Communication and Hand Signals

About 8 minutes to deliver

One signaller, agreed signals, and a radio channel somebody is actually listening to — plus what to do when the plan and the noise disagree.

Most equipment incidents have a communication failure somewhere in them: two people signalling, a radio nobody was on, a shout nobody heard, or an instruction understood two different ways.

THE RULES THAT ALREADY EXIST

- Crane signals — 1926.1419 requires the signal person and the operator to agree on the method before operations begin, and a hand signal chart to be posted at the job site or on the equipment. Standard signals unless the lift needs a non-standard one, agreed in advance.
- Flagging — 1926.201 sends you to the MUTCD for signalling by flaggers.
- Training — 1926.21(b)(2) makes it the employer's job that people are instructed, and that includes being instructed in a language and vocabulary they understand.

MAKING IT WORK ON THE DAY

- One signaller. Named out loud, before the machine moves. Two people waving means the operator picks one and the other is watching something they cannot see.
- Agree the signals before you start — not by assuming everyone learned the same ones somewhere else.
- Anyone can call an emergency stop. Everyone should be told that, in as many words, and the signal for it should be one nobody can mistake.
- No signal means stop. If the operator loses sight of the signaller, or the radio goes quiet, the machine stops. That rule is what makes the whole system safe rather than approximate.

RADIOS

- One channel, agreed, and somebody monitoring it. A radio in a truck is not communication.
- Say who you are and who you want. "Base, this is Mike on the north side."
- Read it back. Repeat the instruction before you act on it. It takes three seconds and it catches the one in twenty that was heard wrong.
- Do not rely on a radio near a running machine. If it matters and it is loud, get eyes on each other.

LANGUAGE

If part of the crew works in Spanish, the signals, the briefing and the stop word have to work in Spanish too. A safety instruction understood by most of a crew is a safety instruction that failed.

ASK THE CREW

- Who is signalling today, and has everyone agreed the signals?
- What is our emergency stop signal, and does everyone know it?
- Does everyone on this crew understand the briefing in a language they actually use?

29 CFR 1926.1419 · 29 CFR 1926.201 · 29 CFR 1926.21

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafetysolutions.com

v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafetysolutions.com/toolbox-talks/site-communication-and-hand-signals>

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Site Communication and Hand Signals

About 8 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.1419 · 29 CFR 1926.201 · 29 CFR 1926.21

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

Form supplied by Migna Safety Solutions · v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/site-communication-and-hand-signals>

Keep this sheet with your training records. This form is supplied blank by Migna Safety Solutions — we did not deliver this session, were not present, and make no representation about what was said or who attended. A toolbox talk is general awareness on one topic and does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. The employer remains responsible for site-specific hazard assessment and for the training its workers are required to have. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, and confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. training.mignasafety.com