

The First Week on a New Job

About 8 minutes to deliver

New workers get hurt at several times the rate of experienced ones — and it is almost never because they were careless.

Look at almost any injury data and the same thing shows up: a large share of injuries happen to people in their first weeks on a job. Not their first weeks in the trade — their first weeks here.

It is worth being honest about why, because it is not carelessness.

- They do not know this site: which door, which route, which machine has the trick to it.
- They have not built the reflexes yet. Experienced people do a hundred small avoidances a day without noticing them.
- They do not want to look stupid. This is the big one. Somebody new would rather guess than ask a question that makes them look like they cannot do the job they were just hired for.
- They do not yet believe they are allowed to stop. Everyone else is moving fast, so they move fast.

1926.21(b)(2) puts the obligation on the employer: instruct each employee in recognising and avoiding unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to their work — in a language they understand. Not "let them pick it up."

IF YOU ARE NEW

- Ask. Every time. Nobody on this crew has ever thought less of somebody for asking. The people who have been here twenty years still ask.
- Ask twice if the first answer was "you'll be fine."
- Say when you have not done it before. That sentence is the most useful thing you can say, and it takes about two seconds.
- You can stop a job. On your first day, same as anyone. Nobody here gets grief for it.
- Speak up about your own gear — a harness that does not fit, boots that do not, a respirator you were never fit tested on.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN HERE A WHILE

- Give somebody new a name to go to. One person, said out loud, not "ask anyone."
- Watch them without hovering. The first time they do a task, be nearby.
- Explain the why. "We go round rather than through" sticks. "Don't go through there" gets forgotten by Thursday.
- Do not let them watch you take the shortcut. Whatever you do in front of somebody new is the version they learn, and they will do it without your twenty years of judgement about when it is survivable.
- Ask them what looked strange this week. Fresh eyes see what we have stopped seeing, and that is worth more than the answer usually gets treated as.

ASK THE CREW

- Who is new on this site this month, and who is their go-to person?
- What is the thing about this job that nobody thinks to explain?
- If you are new here — what has looked odd to you this week?

29 CFR 1926.21 • 29 CFR 1910.132

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

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Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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