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## steps to an effective crew talk

By Susan Main

Crew talks can promote safety in all work industries and work situations. These simple steps can help you make the most of them.

Crew talks, also called tool box meetings, are an excellent way to deliver information on the shop floor, outside the site trailer, at the cash register, or in the lunch room. While they don't replace formal classroom training, crew talks can be used to provide refresher training or demonstrate new equipment, processes, and work practices.

### 1. Start by explaining the goal of your crew talk

Open the discussion by telling the crew exactly what you want them to know when you are done. For example: "Today we're going to talk about fit-testing of respirators. At the end of this crew talk, I want you to understand how it's done so you can do it on your own." Don't say: "Today we're going to talk about respirators," because that's too vague.

### 2. Use a prop to demonstrate

Dan Morice, lead hand at Aggressive Tube Bending, describes the advantage of using a prop during crew talks — a new tip he learned at a manufacturing safety conference last fall.

"If you say something a bunch of times, people will remember it a little bit," says Morice. "But if you actually physically show them what to do, and then have them do it for you, that's how it really, really sticks with people."

For example, you could ask the crew to bring their respirators when you demonstrate a fit check, then ask them to do it themselves. This gives everyone a chance to see, hear, and do the procedure – reinforcing their learning in three different ways.

### 3. Use plain language and keep a narrow focus

Know your audience and tailor your language appropriately, especially when your crew includes people learning English as a new language. Avoid using technical terms; instead, use the language of the workplace. Don't overload people by going into broad details of the history and background of your topic.

### 4. Limit your talk to 5 to 7 minutes

You may wish to gather your crew together for up to 15 minutes, but make sure you aren't talking for the entire time. Give people enough time to ask questions and show they understand.

### 5. Confirm your message has been received

As a supervisor, you are responsible for ensuring that your crew understands the information you conveyed. The best way to do this is by asking them to do a hands-on demonstration of what you just showed them. For example, if you're doing a respirator fit check, you might ask someone to demonstrate a fit check from the start. This gives you a chance to offer assistance if necessary.

### 6. Follow up privately if someone really doesn't get it

If you sense someone is having a lot of difficulty, take that person aside, one-on-one. Talk with them away from the group so they don't feel demeaned or belittled. You

could say: "I notice you've been having some problems with that. Let's go through it again."

"For some guys, it's a bit of a language thing," says Morice, who instructs people whose native languages include Chinese, Korean, Italian, Portuguese, and Polish. "It's not that they're not listening; it's that they don't understand what you're saying, so you have to take a little extra time. Once I know they really understand, then I feel comfortable to let them go and do the task."

### 7. Keep a record of attendance

Some companies make a form for recording the date, time, and topic discussed. Have people print their names so it's legible, and include details on the topic.

"Discussed fall protection" or "discussed safety" is too vague. Recording specific details will ensure the documentation makes sense to you, and others, in the future.

### 8. Close your talk on a positive note

Remind the crew why the topic is important and thank them for listening. Keep an open door policy and make sure everyone knows who to talk to if they have questions later.

Later in the shift, check to see if workers are demonstrating their new knowledge or skill. Effective supervision includes walking around and making sure the crew has taken the information and put it into practice in the real

work world. Correct unsafe practices – and let people know when you notice them doing a job safely.

## Toolbox meeting guides

Running effective toolbox meetings can be a challenge. To help make it easier, WorkSafeBC has developed toolbox meeting guides to provide a simple, clear format for conducting effective toolbox talks. There is a toolbox meeting checklist, as well as guides on specific construction safety topics that should help encourage safe work practices.

[www2.worksafebc.com/Portals/Construction/ToolboxMeetingGuides-Index.asp](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Portals/Construction/ToolboxMeetingGuides-Index.asp)

