Behavior-based safety toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.20, 1904.35, 1926.21

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

When was the last time someone stopped to tell you that you did a job the safe way?

Why it matters

A lot of what we do on the job is habit, and habits can be safe or risky. Behavior-based safety means watching how work really gets done, talking about it, and fixing what pushes people toward shortcuts. Done right, it is coaching between coworkers. Done wrong, it turns into blame, and people stop speaking up.

Key points

1. **Know what behavior-based safety is**
   Behavior-based safety, or BBS, looks at what people actually do on the job, not just what the rules say. A coworker watches a task for a few minutes, notes the safe and risky actions, and talks about them with the person right away. The point is to learn why risky habits happen and fix the cause. It is coaching, not policing.

2. **Start with what went right**
   When you see someone working safely, tell them, and be specific, like 'Good call setting the cones before you started.' Specific praise tells people exactly what to keep doing. It also makes the next conversation easier when you need to point out a risk.

3. **Talk about the risk, not the person**
   If you see a risky action, say what you saw and why it worries you, then ask what got in the way of doing it safely. Maybe the right tool was not there, or the crew was rushing to finish. Keep names off observation cards, and never use an observation to discipline someone. If people feel watched and judged, they hide problems instead of fixing them.

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4 Fix the cause, not just the habit

Risky behavior often has a reason behind it, like a missing guardrail, a broken tool or a schedule that rewards shortcuts. Behavior-based safety does not replace fixing hazards. On construction sites, any machinery, tool, material or equipment that does not meet an applicable OSHA construction requirement must not be used, and it must be tagged as unsafe, have its controls locked so it cannot run, or be physically removed from its place of operation (29 CFR 1926.20(b)(3)). The employer's safety program must also provide for frequent and regular inspections of job sites, materials and equipment by competent persons designated by the employer (29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2)).

29 CFR 1926.20(b)(3)

5 Keep injury reporting open

BBS only works if people speak up about injuries and close calls, so reward safe work and reporting, not a clean injury log. Under OSHA's recordkeeping rule, employers must have a reasonable procedure for employees to report work-related injuries and illnesses promptly and accurately, and a procedure is not reasonable if it would deter or discourage a reasonable employee from accurately reporting (29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)). Employers must not discharge or in any manner discriminate against an employee for reporting a work-related injury or illness.

29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)(iv)

6 Make training part of it

OSHA has no specific standard for behavior-based safety, but the general duty to train still applies. In construction, the employer must instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations that apply to their work environment (29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2)). If observations keep finding the same risky habit, the crew may need more training or a better setup.

29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2)

Scenario

Picture this: During an observation, you see a laborer cutting pavers with a wet saw and no eye protection. When you ask about it, he says the only face shield on site is cracked and the supply house is an hour away, so the crew has gone without all week. What do you say to him, what goes on the observation card, and what should the supervisor fix today?

Crew discussion

1. What is one safe habit you have seen on this crew this week that we should keep?
2. Which shortcut do people take most on this job, and what pushes them to take it?
3. How would you want a coworker to tell you they saw you doing something risky?
4. What would make you more comfortable reporting an injury or a close call?

Bottom line **Watch the work, praise what is safe, ask why when it is not, and fix the cause instead of blaming the person.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema: Behavior-based safety / Seguridad basada en el comportamiento

Date / Fecha: _____

Trainer / Instructor: _____ Location / Lugar: _____ Company / Empresa: _____

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