Complacency toolbox talk: stay alert on routine work

29 CFR 1926.20, 1926.21, 1926.28, 1910.132

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Think of a task you have done so many times you could do it in your sleep. When was the last time you stopped and really looked at the hazards in it?

Why it matters

Complacency is not laziness. It catches skilled, experienced people, because doing a job over and over without getting hurt makes the danger feel smaller than it is. The hazards have not changed, only our attention has. That gap is where shortcuts, missed steps and nasty surprises happen.

Key points

1. **Know what complacency looks like**
   Complacency is feeling so comfortable with a task that you stop paying attention to the risks. It looks like skipping a step because it is always fine, leaving off PPE for a quick job or not checking equipment because it worked yesterday. If you catch yourself thinking 'I could do this in my sleep,' that is your cue to slow down.

2. **Watch for the warning signs**
   Rushing, daydreaming, shortcuts, ignoring small problems and feeling that the rules are only for new people are all warning signs. Fatigue, long stretches of the same work and busy days make it worse. Speak up when you see it in a coworker, expect them to do the same for you, and thank people who speak up.

3. **Treat every job like a new job**
   Before you start, take a moment to look at what is different today: the weather, the ground, the people around you and the equipment. Walk the area and ask what could go wrong. Conditions change even when the task does not.

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4 Do your checks for real

Pre-use checks and inspections catch what memory misses on routine work, so do them for real instead of just signing the sheet. In construction, the employer's safety program must provide for frequent and regular inspections of job sites, materials and equipment by competent persons (29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2)). On construction work, equipment that does not meet the rules must be tagged as unsafe, have its controls locked so it cannot be used, or be removed from where it operates (29 CFR 1926.20(b)(3)).

29 CFR 1926.20(b)(2)

5 Break up the routine

Rotate tasks when you can, take your breaks and switch who leads the toolbox talk so it does not turn into background noise. Ask a newer worker to walk through the hazards of a job, because fresh eyes catch things the rest of us stop seeing. Mix up the topics and get the crew talking instead of just listening.

6 Keep training fresh

OSHA has no specific standard for complacency, 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)). Refresher talks like this one keep the hazards in front of the crew, especially on jobs you have done for years.

29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2)

Scenario

Picture this: A crew has set up the same way on job after job without a problem. On this job, the worker who usually guides the concrete truck is out, and nobody walks the backing path because 'we always set up the same way.' The truck starts backing toward a trench that was not there on the last job. What should the crew have done before the truck moved, and who should have spoken up?

Crew discussion

1. Which jobs do we do so often that we might be running on autopilot?
2. What shortcuts have you seen on routine work, and why do people take them?
3. How can we remind each other to slow down without it feeling like criticism?
4. What changed on this site today that could catch someone off guard?

Bottom line **The task may be routine, but the hazards never are, so look at every job like it is your first.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Complacency / Complacencia

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____

Location / Lugar _____

Company / Empresa _____

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