

AT THE END OF THE WORKDAY, EVERYONE GOES HOME SAFE.

The Importance of Signage on the Jobsite

Toolbox Talk



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Communication is a key element for success in all aspects of life. Having good communication removes confusion and ultimately helps minimize mistakes. As we know, minimizing risks means minimizing mistakes, which in turn results in minimizing near misses or even worse, accidents.

To make sure accidents do not happen, good communication must take place, and it must happen at all times. While it is always best to have verbal communication, it is not always feasible to have a person standing around to warn people of a nearby hazard. Because of this, signage is often used to ensure people are notified that a hazard is nearby and how to protect themselves from it.

Signs are used to signal to those in the area what is going on, what can go wrong, and how serious the hazard is.

OSHA regulates safety signs to ensure consistency (and thus clear communication). Their regulations can be found in 29 CFR 1910.145. Because they are regulated, every safety sign at every jobsite and facility can

be understood by anyone who enters in a consistent way, eliminating confusion in communication.

When signs are not used or when they are ignored, mistakes happen. Avoidable injuries and deaths happen each year because signs are ignored or not utilized in the first place.

It is not worth risking the life or well-being of a person because a sign was not purchased, was destroyed, was improperly placed, was not maintained, or was ignored.

Incident Profile:

Along a state highway in an unpopulated area, two employees were patching potholes that were potentially dangerous to motorists.

They decided to not put up "Road Work Ahead" signs to warn motorists, as only a few spots were not fully visible for long distances: they considered it a waste of time.

While they were filling one of the potholes at the corner of a hill, an SUV going 20 MPH over the speed limit struck the employees. The first employee was clipped and suffered a bro-

ken arm, two broken legs, and a fractured skull.

The second employee was struck head-on by the vehicle and died before the ambulance could arrive.

Talking Points:

1. How much time would it have taken to post warning signs in the incident above?
2. Do I and those I work with always follow the warnings of signs?
3. In what situation would it be okay to forego posting signs?
4. What signs are damaged or illegible on our site that need to be replaced?

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