



Training

A Safety Insider’s Take: When to Train and Retrain Your Associates

Frank Quarato | Mar 01, 2017

What You Need To Know

Many associates do not know the “why” of safety training.

Try to ensure a mix of performance and classroom training.

Integrating a third-party supplier can help you with training resources.

The best way to reorient associates is often to make sure the first round of training covers the basics.

Think about safety training in three words: “what,” “how” and “why.” Almost all associates know what they are supposed to do. Some know how to do it. Fewer, if anyone, may know why they do something.

Associates often do not rise to the level of their employer’s expectations, but rather they fall down to the level of their initial training. It’s key to properly train and retrain associates rather than allow their unsafe actions to be duplicated.

Perfection, in terms of employee safety, comes from practice training and retraining to a minimum accepted standard. That means spending enough time on performance-based (hands-on) and compliance-based (classroom) training.

A Mix of Hands-On and Classroom Training

Let’s start with an example. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) enlisted the help of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in writing the *NFPA 70E arc flash training*. Within this training process, the associate starts with classroom training, then has hands-on training and finally demonstrates his or her ability to perform the task in the workplace. Each stage focuses on the training guidelines.

Surprisingly, all of OSHA’s safety training regulations do not have much in the way of performance standards for the minimum acceptable demonstration of skill within a classroom setting.

The closest we see in a performance-based standard within compliance-based classroom instruction is that of forklift training. In that training, the associates have both classroom and hands-on training, and they are observed throughout the year by their supervisor, who judges whether they are safely operating their equipment. The classroom focuses on compliance, and the observation focuses on performance. Retraining occurs in a close-call event, such as the loss of product, a near miss or worse.

Let's hope for a more proactive stance on performance-based training in the future. The classroom is important, but so is allowing for the student to demonstrate, to an acceptable standard, his or her abilities in the profession.

A Clear Return on Investment

Safety training and retraining that focuses on the what, how and why should be an ongoing, integrated investment for companies that desire high-performance organizations.

Management has a fiduciary duty to provide training that empowers associates to recognize hazards pertaining to their work and work environment.

A great training and retraining program can yield profit and production. It can also create a sense of worth and purpose and a feeling of loyalty among workers to their employer. It also lowers the fixed cost of risk in the employer's workers' compensation, professional and general liability insurances, which is good for the company's bottom line.

Giving an associate high-performance safety training allows for exponential benefits. The question of when to retrain, which can be costly, is replaced by a purposeful integration of training as part of an associate's onboarding and introduction to the job.

Working with Partners

One big trend today is that companies are allowing for a larger role for the distribution manager and sales associates of outside companies, like those of MSC Industrial Supply Co. As an outside resource, it provides compliance-based safety training and additional support to the manufacturers of safety equipment.

Employers wishing to satisfy both compliance- and performance-based training techniques may want to consider these outside resources to make sure their ongoing integrated safety training works best for their company.

Working with one's safety equipment supplier can tip off an employer as to the large amounts of money that can be saved throughout the year just from eliminating unneeded risk from the workplace.

Frank Quarato is president of the Center for Safety & Environmental Management, which conducts safety training and education programs for a wide range of businesses.

What training resources do you use? What resources would be helpful?