

# **Workers At Risk** (Mentoring)

Training & Communications

## **Disclaimer**

The information presented in this publication is intended for general use and may not apply to every circumstance. It is not a definitive guide to government regulations and does not relieve persons using this publication from their responsibilities under applicable legislation. The Alberta Construction Safety Association does not guarantee the accuracy of, nor assume liability for, the information presented here. Individual counseling and advice is available from the Association.

## **Copyright**

© revised 2001 Alberta Construction Safety Association. This publication is the property of the Alberta Construction Safety Association. Reproduction in any form by any means, in whole or in part, or use of this publication for other than Alberta Construction Safety Association uses, is prohibited without the expressed written consent of the Association.

# MODULE 1

## Introduction — Workers at Risk

### Why Workers at Risk?

The statistics below are the reason many different partners in workplace safety are focusing on the reduction of incidents and accidents related to new/young workers.

### Alberta Workplace Injury Statistics:

Every four minutes a worker is injured on an Alberta worksite. In 2000, there were more than 146,000 work-related injuries. Of these, more than 40,000 were serious enough for the worker to miss work beyond the day of the accident. One-hundred-eighteen (118) workers died of workplace injuries in 2000, **13 were workers under the age of 25.**

YEAR	# of Workers Covered by WCB	# of New Claims Reported	# of New Lost Time Claims	# of Fatality Claims Accepted
2000	1,214,886	146,361	40,600	118
1999	1,158,904	123,463	36,900	114
1998	1,117,464	126,420	37,600	105
1997	1,048,207	118,121	36,800	120
1996	934,764	98,303	32,900	90

In 2000, the leading causes of workplace fatalities were:

Motor vehicle	26	Occupational disease	32
Worksite trauma	58	Heart condition	1
Overexertion	1		

For injured workers **under the age of 25**, nearly 50% were injured during their first six months on the job. **DETAIL:** For workers under the age of 25, there were more than 37,000 work-related injuries reported in 2000. Of these, more than 8,000 young workers were hurt badly enough to miss work beyond the day of the accident. More than 3,700 of these injuries occurred during their first six months on the job.

For injured workers **over the age of 25**, nearly 25% were injured during their first six months on the job. **DETAIL:** For workers over the age of 25, there were more than 110,000 work-related injuries reported in 2000. Of these, more than 29,000 workers were hurt badly enough to miss work beyond the day of the accident. More than 6,000 of these injuries occurred during their first six months on the job.

**Emphasis must be placed on training the new and young worker to prevent pain and suffering.**

**This program will focus on the need for additional training for all new and young workers.**

## Mentoring

**What is it?** In simple terms, it is teaching, coaching, guiding. Our first mentors were obviously our parents, although some of us were mentored by older brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, or close family friends.

In actual practice, a mentor was anyone with skill and knowledge, someone with specialized expertise to offer.

Mentoring is not something new. Mentoring was the primary means of passing information from one generation to the other for most primitive societies. Long before the age of written language, skills would have been passed on from generation to generation. It would have been the way that the human race survived. Mentoring would have provided the necessary safety training to survive the lifestyle of a primitive world.

Information must be passed on in a manner relevant to the student. Mentor and student must become a team, with both respecting the other. The mentor cannot force the student to learn but must rather gain the trust and respect of the student.

Many of the skills learned by the student must be enhanced through experimentation. What is important is to explain and demonstrate how to do something safely and then let the student do the job. Some of the learning process must come from within the student, through personal observations and imagination.

## Where Does Safety Fit?

There are three things that are important to understand.

**Safety equals skill.** Safety practices are not something added onto a task, not something extra to be done alongside the job itself. Safety practices are part of the craft itself, just as central to the task as the care with taping that gives drywalling its quality, or the precision control that makes someone a master with a backhoe. This means that it is not possible to have a skilled craftsman, who is thoughtless about safety, because doing a job well means minimizing risk. Skill and safety cannot be separated.

**Safety means security.** Safety practices are not important just because we put a priority on human safety. They are also important because they are good business. The better a company's safety record, the more it saves on losses (property, time and production, compensation costs etc.). Every accident/incident – even if there is no serious damage or injury - costs the company money, because to some extent it interrupts the smooth flow of productivity. Of course, the more serious it is the more it costs in terms of labour time lost, if nothing else. Therefore, the better the safety record the healthier the company is, and the more competitive the company can be. That translates into more work and better security for all employees.

**Safety is what YOU make it.** No matter how much you talk about safety, no matter how important you tell people it is, safety will be as important to your crew members as it is to you - and no more. If safety is not a genuine concern for you, it won't be for them. If you talk a safety game but take short-cuts around it, so will they. They are the ones who must make the worksite a safe one, but whether or not they do so, comes down to you - not what you say or threaten, but what you do yourself, day in and day out.

What all this means, is that safety is not just another item on your job description, another headache for you to think about and schedule in somewhere. Safety is as important as your responsibility to "get the job done." By becoming a good mentor you can influence life of a fellow worker. Help eliminate pain and suffering and provide increased security for them and yourself.

## Legislation

There are federal, provincial, and municipal laws regarding construction health & safety. The major legislation governing workers in Alberta is the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, a piece of "umbrella legislation" that covers most of the safety regulations in effect in Alberta. Other provincial legislation covers specific aspects of safe operation and performance, such as electrical protection, building standards, etc.

The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, the General Safety Regulations and more specific regulations can be found in what is often called "the blue binder." Your organization/company should have this binder for easy access, and it should be kept up-to-date at all times. Every supervisor needs to become familiar with these documents, and referring to them should be second-nature any time you and management are planning a new task.

The Act and the Regulations are written in technical, legal language. It can be difficult to sort out exactly what they mean, but you have to understand them clearly if you are going to observe and enforce them. When you need to have a regulation clarified or interpreted as to whether it applies in a particular situation, contact a Workplace Health and Safety Officer in any of the local or regional offices by calling 1-866-415-8690 or on the web site at [www.whs.gov.ab.ca](http://www.whs.gov.ab.ca).

The specific regulations governing your worksite at any given time will depend on the combination of conditions, equipment, tools, etc. that are involved in a particular job. Some of the Alberta Legislation, in this "blue binder" covers the following:

- **Occupational Health and Safety Act - legislation**
- **General Safety Regulation - lists performance standards for industry in general**
- **First Aid Regulation - outlines requirements for supplies and services**
- **Chemical Hazards Regulation - pertains to WHMIS, Asbestos, Coal Dust and Silica**

- **Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee Regulations and Minister's Designation Orders**
- **Ventilation Regulation - lists regulations and performance standards**
- **Noise Regulation - outlines performance standards and reporting requirements**
- **Explosives Safety Regulation - lists performance standards**
- **Mines Regulation**

Depending on the nature of your work or your worksite, several of these regulations may apply to you and your crews. Some part of the Alberta Legislation binder applies to almost every worker in the province.

## **Highlights of the Occupational Health And Safety Act and Regulations**

It is important to find out all of the regulations that apply to workers. However, the following general provisions apply to every construction project, no matter how many trades are involved.

1. Employers must ensure the health and safety of their workers.
2. Workers must take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of themselves and of other workers, and must cooperate with their employers for the purpose of protecting others' and their own health and safety.
3. If serious injury, or an accident that has the potential for serious injury, occurs at a worksite, the employer must notify Workplace Health & Safety - and must conduct an investigation.
4. No worker is to carry out any work if they have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the work presents imminent danger to their own or to another worker's health and safety.
5. In any case where work could endanger any worker, the employer must ensure that the work is done only by a worker who is competent for that task, or under the direct supervision of a worker who is competent for that task.
6. A person who contravenes the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act or Regulations, or who fails to comply with an order made under the Act or the Regulations, is guilty of an offence and is liable for fines or imprisonment.



## MODULE 2

### What Training Is

A large part of training involves teaching — giving people the information and the models they need, and helping them to acquire or develop the skill and judgement required in their work. This means not only showing them what to do and how to do it, but setting a good example as well.

An equally large part of training is evaluation, which involves monitoring people's work and giving them feedback about how well they are doing. To be useful, that feedback must include praise for things they are doing well, and specific instructions about what to do differently when problems are identified.

### *On the Job Training*

“Sometimes it’s easier to do the job yourself than try to teach someone else to do it.” That may be true – the first time. But as a mentor, part of your job is to increase the long-term effectiveness of your team. That may mean a lot of hands-on, on-the-job training. This training takes patience and skill. You need to combine your skills as a presenter, teacher, facilitator, and listener. Mentors who do this well have workers who are motivated, skilled, and productive.

When you do on-the-job training:

- **Tell** — tell the person what they are going to learn. Provide the directions they need to do the job. Allow the person to ask questions. Remember, verbal directions are often misheard or forgotten, so make sure you check for understanding once you have finished explaining.
- **Show** — it’s best to show the person how the job is done. Make sure the person can see what you’re doing. Don’t be in a hurry – the purpose is not to do the job fast, but to make sure the person sees each step and how it’s done.
- **Do** — ask the person to do the work. Watch and guide them as they are learning the skill. You might tell them what they’re doing wrong directly: “Don’t do it that way, you’ll cut your finger off!” Or your guidance may be in the form of a question: “What do you think will happen if you put the pipe in that way?” Make sure they practice the skills a few times while you are watching.
- **Give feedback** — tell the person how they’re doing. You might say: “You’re really getting the hang of this. Once you get a little more control, you will want to work on getting it done a bit faster.” Be informative and encouraging.

- **Check on progress** – after leaving the person alone for a while, come back and check on their progress. If they need correcting, go through the tell-show-do-feedback cycle again. Answer any questions that may have come up since you first showed them the job.

## General Training Procedures

### 1. Prepare the new worker

- Explain the job in detail and the reason for doing it
- Explain the safety precautions in detail including any PPE requirements
- Try to link the workers past experience to the new job
- Encourage questions to make sure the worker understands everything you are saying and doing
- Take all the time necessary for full understanding
- Provide written safe work practices and or safe job procedures for the job

### 2. Demonstrate and describe

- Go through the procedure at normal speed
- Go through the procedure at slow speed
- Include safety precautions during the normal sequence of tasks
- Have the worker perform the procedure until they can do it exactly as required
- Go on to the next procedure
- After all of the procedures go smoothly have the worker perform the entire tasks. Repeat any steps that are not performed correctly.
- Don't teach more than the worker can understand at one time

### 3. Observe the worker on the job

- After a period of time have the worker perform the task at or near normal speed
- Answer any questions or repeat any key points the worker may have missed
- When you feel they are ready have the worker perform the task alone
- Praise work well done
- Encourage initiative and respect suggestions for improvement
- Keep written records of who what when

### 4. Check progress

- Make unscheduled visits
- Makes visits shorter and less frequent as the worker progresses
- Correct unsafe work habits
- Monitor the worker to ensure that standards are maintained

## MODULE 3

### Communication skills

Communication is part of every one of your tasks. Job planning means getting the right information and implementing it.

This module is designed to help you improve your communication skills. Many techniques and suggestions are included. But, in the end, you are encouraged to fit these techniques and suggestions into your own personal style. That way you'll feel comfortable and be a successful communicator.

It's in your best interest to improve your communication skills – the better communicator you are, the better mentor you will be.

### Mentoring Communication

Although most aspects of mentoring include communication skills, mentors involved in health and safety use communication skills to do On-the-job training — talks and demonstrations given by a mentor to one or more workers in the work area. On-the-job training is often done “on the fly”. For example, a worker may not be sure what solvent to use for a job. Instead of just giving the answer quickly, you may spend a couple of minutes to explain what kinds of solvents are available and which ones are the best to use for certain jobs. At other times on-the-job training may be a scheduled event. For example, when a new machine is purchased, you may gather your team around the equipment to give a demonstration.

### How Communication Works

Before looking at specific communication techniques, you need to understand how communication works.

Communication is the process of giving and receiving information. It involves:

- **Sender** — that's you, providing information.
- **Message** — the information you want to get across.
- **Receiver** — your audience – workers, management, etc.
- **Feedback** — their reaction to your message – how you know if they have (or haven't) understood you.

If one of these factors of communication is removed (or done incorrectly) the whole process will fail. The message must be sent clearly by the sender. Then the message must get to the receiver. And then the receiver must be willing and able to listen to the message. Finally, the receiver needs to provide feedback to the sender to make sure the message was heard correctly.

Of course, the communication process is much more complex than this. But all communication breaks down into these areas. And most communication errors can be found in one of these areas.

If a message has not been understood, it could be because of a breakdown in any one of these areas. A breakdown in communication cannot always be blamed on the sender (or on the receiver).

## Communication Barriers

Communication breakdowns occur. These are called communication barriers. There are five main types:

- **Sender barriers** — occur when the sender does not send the message clearly. This may be for a number of reasons. The sender:
  - may not be the right age to be a good mentor (i.e., too old).
  - does not have a clear message in their own mind.
  - assumes the receiver has a base of knowledge (that they don't).
  - uses unfamiliar words and examples.
  - ignores clues that show the receiver is distracted.
  - Does not want to be a mentor.
- **Message barriers** — sometimes the message itself causes a communication error. This can be because the message:
  - has too many words.
  - contains words that have different meanings.
  - addresses more than one issue.
  - includes hidden or personal agendas.
- **Physical barriers** — these are obstructions to the message. Physical barriers often have more to do with location than with the sender or the receiver. Physical barriers include:
  - excessive background noise.
  - uncomfortable temperatures/surroundings.
  - lack of privacy.

- **Receiver barriers** — communication can fail because the receiver:
  - makes assumptions.
  - jumps to conclusions.
  - focuses on preconceived ideas.
  - rejects any message that contradicts their beliefs and assumptions.
  - is preoccupied with emotional concerns.
  - does not ask questions to clarify points that are unclear.
  - fills in gaps with their own ideas, nodding in agreement, but not really agreeing.
- **Relationship barriers** — barriers that occur between the sender and receiver:
  - lack of common experiences.
  - lack of verbal skills.
  - language difficulties.
  - hostility.
  - defensiveness.
  - issues regarding status.
  - gender issues.

## EXERCISE 2

Break into groups and complete this exercise. What can you do to control or eliminate each of these types of barriers?

1. Sender Barriers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Message Barriers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Physical Barriers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Receiver Barriers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Relationship Barriers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Communication Techniques

In this section, we're going to look at techniques for speaking and listening.

### Speaking

When you're doing on-the-job training, speaking is one major part of the process. You may be speaking to one person or to a group of people. In this section, you will get a chance to evaluate what type of speaker you are. Then we'll look at ways to address speaker anxiety. Following that, we'll review some of the techniques you can use to reduce anxiety and become a better speaker.

## EXERCISE 3 – Types Of Public Speakers

### *What Type Are You?*

Individually answer the following questions. Use the scoring chart to determine what type of speaker you are.

- 1 How often do you speak in front of a group of five or more people?
  - a. At least once every week.
  - b. Once a month.
  - c. Two or three times a year.
  - d. Rarely.
  
2. If a request for a public speaker is made to your department, you:
  - a. Accept (gladly) and make the presentation yourself.
  - b. Accept (hesitantly) and make the presentation yourself.
  - c. Accept and delegate the presentation to one of your staff.
  - d. Decline immediately.
  
3. Before public speaking you feel:
  - a. Energetic and enthused.
  - b. Slightly nervous, but looking forward to doing it.
  - c. Nervous – sweaty palms, upset stomach, glad when it will be over.
  - d. Terrified – very upset stomach, not sure if you will make it through the presentation.
  
4. During a presentation you feel:
  - a. Completely at ease – you know you’re doing great and you’re enjoying every minute.
  - b. Slightly uncomfortable, but still in control – you are doing reasonably well, but being the center of attention is causing some apprehension.
  - c. Somewhat uncomfortable – you present the information okay, but you’ll be much calmer when you’re done.
  - d. Very uncomfortable – you know you’re blowing it and you can’t wait until it is over.
  
5. After a presentation, a typical statement you might make would be:
  - a. “I was fabulous!”
  - b. “That was okay, I could have done better. Next time I’m going to improve.”
  - c. “I messed up. Hopefully I won’t have to do this very often.”
  - d. “I really did a lousy job. I’m never going to do that again.”

#### **Scoring: Give Yourself:**

3 points for every (a) answer

2 points for every (b) answer

1 point for every (c) answer

0 points for every (d) answer

Total Points \_\_\_\_\_

Here are the types of presenters. Look up the one that matches your score:

- **Seeker (12 to 15 points).** As a seeker, you look for opportunities to speak. In fact, you love to stand up in front of a group and teach, facilitate, present, or just share your thoughts. Before speaking, you are calm and confident. To be this comfortable, you have probably had a lot of practice speaking in front of groups. Keep up the good work! However, take care not to extend your presentation just because you have a captive audience. Many people wish they had your speaking ability – and that’s where you can really help! You can share your speaking Knowledge and confidence with others. Try to provide opportunities for others in your department or company to do some speaking as well. Give them pointers on what they can do to relax and enjoy it like you do. However, even with help, most people probably won’t be as good as you (at least in the beginning) – so be patient and encouraging.
- **Acceptor (8 to 11 points).** As an acceptor, you will get up and speak because it is part of the job, but you do not seek speaking opportunities. Sometimes you may experience some nervousness or anxiety, but for the most part, you are quite calm and are looking for ways to improve your speaking ability. It may be that you will never get real “enjoyment” out of speaking, but you can be quite capable. As an acceptor, you have most (if not all) of the speaking skills you need. What would probably improve your speaking ability is to practice more often. You might want to try to find a few more opportunities to train, facilitate, present, or speak.
- **Resistor (3 to 7 points).** As a resistor, you speak with great reluctance. You will do it if you have to, but if there’s any way to get out of it, you’ll probably be able to find it. You’ve had some practice (but probably not a lot). To make speaking easier, you might want to try to find a mentor – someone who speaks often and well. When you have to make a speech, ask your mentor to review your plan (or script). Try to increase the number of times you speak. Start off slowly and give it a shot. The more times you speak, the easier it will become.
- **Avoider (0 to 2 points).** As an avoider, you do everything possible to escape getting up to speak in front of a group of people. Speaking probably causes great anxiety for you. This course looks at techniques you can use to reduce this anxiety. The most important thing is not to be too hard on yourself. If you do speak, remember that most people get uncomfortable – you’re not alone. You can only get better (and more comfortable) at speaking by doing it. Start off small (speaking to small groups with short talks). It will get easier.

## Your Speaking Anxiety

Stress . . . we've all felt it. Many research studies rate speaking in front of a group as one of the highest stress causing activities. Stress symptoms include: upset stomach, sweating, lower back pain, shaky arms and legs, and a rapid heartbeat. What's worse is that the more you experience the symptom, the more stressed you can become. For example, if your stomach is upset before speaking, then you may become stressed that your stomach is upset. Then your stomach becomes more upset.

So what do you do when this happens? Here are some techniques you can use to lower your speaking anxiety:

- **Organize** — knowing that you're in control of the information will help reduce stress. Before speaking, you should make an outline including timing notes, required content, and other thoughts. Refer to your notes during your presentation – this is a sign of a practiced speaker. Just be careful not to read your notes word for word.
- **Visualize** — imagine success. You may want to do this a few times (a few days before your presentation, a few hours before, and a few minutes before). To do this, find a quiet, private place. Close your eyes. Make an image of yourself speaking. In your image, the people you are speaking to are interested and alert. You are clear and enthusiastic. It's also important to avoid thoughts of failure. It's natural for these thoughts to occur, but each time one does – stop it immediately. You may want to say to yourself, "No, I will not let myself think that way." Then force your mind to imagine success instead.
- **Practice** — all good speakers do it – practice what you're going to say and do. Some people try to practice by just reading their notes and thinking about what they're going to say. That's fine, but it's not enough. To increase your effectiveness, read your presentation out loud. One of best ways is to stand in front of a mirror and actually do your presentation. Look at your facial expression and body language. Keep practicing until you feel confident that you know what you're going to say and do.
- **Breathe** — under extreme stress, people often say they forget to breathe. Of course, you can only do this for so long. Fortunately, if you improve your breathing you can also reduce your stress. Try taking slow deep breaths a few minutes before you speak. One method of controlled breathing is to place your hand on your upper abdomen and breathe in. Make sure your stomach expands, not your chest. Then breathe out and your stomach deflates. Repeat this a few times.

- **Focus** — keep your focus on being relaxed during your presentation. Again, don't allow yourself to think negative thoughts. Focus on what you're going to do and say.
- **Release** — leasing is another exercise that can help you relax. Start by tightening your toes. Then tighten your muscles up through calves, thighs, chests, arms, and fingers. Then release all of these muscles. Breathe deeply and slowly and repeat.
- **Reward yourself** — each time you speak, reward yourself for doing the job. It doesn't matter if you think you did well or not – just trying deserves credit. Whether that means buying a new CD, watching your favourite game on T.V., or giving yourself some reading time – you deserve it.
- **Don't be too critical** — people are usually their own worst critics. What you may see as a terrible job at a presentation, others may think is just fine. And sure, sometimes you may blow it. So what? You tried – and with speaking, that says a lot. Remember, the more speaking you do, the easier it will become.

## Conducting Yourself And Presence

Here are some techniques you can use to make your presentations better:

- **Stance** — stand erect, stay relaxed, and face the group.
- **Movement** — move easily. Don't pace, jump, or fidget. But be careful not to become glued to one spot.
- **Gestures** — use comfortable gestures – do not keep your hands in your pockets, jingle change or keys, play with jewelry, or cross your arms. Use your gestures to help make a point, or to demonstrate your content.
- **Eye contact** — make eye contact with individuals. This will help you feel like you're talking to one person at a time. Eye contact will also help involve your participants.
- **Voice** — speak with a strong, clear voice. Make sure you are loud enough for everyone to hear. Presenters often get nervous and start speaking too quickly. Try to keep a normal speed. Go a little slower if necessary. It's also important to vary your tone. Some of the most boring presenters use a flat low voice. Put some excitement into your presentation by using different levels of sound.

- **Ask for questions** — make sure you ask participants if they have any questions. When someone asks a question, focus on the person. Listen and do not interrupt until they are done speaking. Then repeat the question. You may want to involve others in the answer. Make sure you acknowledge participants for asking questions.
- **Use simple and direct language** — don't get too complex. Too often presenters try to impress their audience, but all they end up doing is confusing them. Your purpose is to provide information, so use a style and language that participants will understand.
- **Avoid jargon/acronyms** — use technical terms only if you are sure they will be understood. If you must use jargon, explain what it means.
- **Empathy** — remember how difficult it was for you as a new worker coming into the construction industry. Treat new workers as you would like to be treated.

## Listening

“To be effective all a mentor has to do is tell people what to do, show people how to do it, and make sure it's done.” Right? Obviously, this is part of a mentor's job, but there's more to it than that. One of the most important (and unfortunately most neglected) mentoring skills is listening.

“Some of the best mentors in the world spend a large part of their day listening.” Right? Absolutely. It's estimated that, on average, people spend about 30% of their time listening – in face-to-face conversations, on the phone, and to mass media. The problem is that about 75% of all verbal communication is ignored. That means people are missing the majority of what you're saying . . . and you're probably doing the same thing to others.

Listening skills can provide dramatic results. Not only will you learn more about what people are thinking and feeling, you'll encourage people to tell you more.

Here are the basics for effective listening:

- **Remove distractions** — it's best to listen to someone in a quiet, private location. Telephone calls or other disturbances can make it difficult to listen effectively. Have your calls held and close the door.
- **Use your body** — sit (or stand if necessary) squarely in front of the speaker. If you sit, lean forward slightly and keep your arms and legs uncrossed. Don't fidget or appear distracted. Focus all your attention on the speaker.
- **Connect with your eyes** — look the speaker in the eyes. Don't hold your gaze too long or you might make the person uncomfortable, but keep making eye contact throughout the conversation.

- **Let silence be** — our culture has trained us to be uncomfortable with silence. But often people need silence to collect their thoughts or to reflect on what they said. In all of your conversations, try to increase the amount of silence you let go by before jumping in and speaking.
- **Prompt for more** — sometimes people need a small push to continue speaking. You can say things like “go on” or “tell me more.” This will let the speaker know you are interested.
- **Ask minimal questions** — you may need to ask a question to clarify what the person is saying. But be careful – just turning your thoughts (advice, judgments, etc.) into questions is not listening. Try to keep your questions to a minimum. People will tell you more honest information if you don’t guide them too much.
- **Paraphrase** — to let the speaker know you are listening, paraphrase what they have said. A paraphrase is broken into two parts. First, restate what they said using your own words. Then ask if you have heard them correctly. An example of a paraphrase would be “so you’re saying that you would like more opportunities for advancement. Is that right?” The person now has the option of letting you know that you’ve heard them correctly or further clarifying the information.

Most successful leaders practice effective listening every day. Good listening skills will improve your working relationships with everyone – workers, colleagues, and managers. Listening skills also go a long way to improve your personal relationships.

### Exercise 4 – Listening

Answer the following questions individually.

What do you think is important to develop good listening skills? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

What makes you feel comfortable when talking to someone? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

What advantages do you think effective listening provides? (work, personal)

---



---



---



---

## The Adult Learner

On-the-job training, toolbox talks, and safety meetings all involve providing information to people. Since this communication is really “teaching,” you need to understand the characteristics of adult learners:

- **Adult learners have experience** — they have spent years at school and may have trade or other training. Draw on their experience and involve the group. People like to make a contribution.
- **Adults like to have fun** — business is serious, but humour and friendliness can go a long way towards getting adults to participate and learn.
- **Adults need to know why they are there** — you need to let adult learners know the purpose of your talk. People’s time is important and they want to feel that you are using it effectively.
- **Adults want to be liked** — it’s important not to publicly criticize or embarrass anyone. If you need to talk to someone about a problem – talk to them privately.
- **Adults want to be treated like adults** — just because you’re in charge, don’t go overboard. If you treat adults like children, you’ll end up with people who won’t take responsibility.

## Exercise 5 – Your Learning Needs

What kinds of things are important to you as an adult learner? (Include both things that you like and things that you don’t like).

LIKES	DISLIKES

## Dealing With Difficult People

When presenting information to people, you may occasionally run into difficult people. They may interrupt often, be hostile, or completely ignore you. If you let a problem situation go on, it will reduce the learning opportunity.

Some suggestions for avoiding difficult situations are:

- **Obtain involvement** — encouraging a feeling of involvement by all people in the group will help make them less likely to be disruptive or hostile. Ask questions. Let people share their experiences. Make sure you get quiet or shy people to join in.
- **Be positive** — don't start a talk by saying "okay, bear with me because we've got to do this – I'll get it over as soon as possible." By doing this, you've set the tone as being boring, negative, and not worthwhile. Instead, let people know that you think this is important. Then they'll see it that way as well.
- **State the purpose** — explain why the discussion is important to their jobs. Make a direct relationship between their time spent with you and the advantages they will achieve because of it.
- **Listen** – if someone expresses a concern, hear them out. Try to solve the problem.

If a problem does arise, here are some things you can do:

- **Identify the reason** — why is the person acting this way? Out of fear? Are they worried that they will look foolish in the meeting? Are they angry about something else? It could be that they did not get enough sleep the night before. Maybe they had a disagreement with their spouse. Obviously, you can't always know the reason and you are not a counselor. But the more you understand the problem, the easier it will be to deal with.
- **Ask the person to stop** — if a person is disrupting your discussion, ask the person to stop the behaviour. When you draw attention to the concern, chances are he/she will stop.
- **Stay professional** — do not get hostile. You need to stay professional. Don't try to embarrass the person or criticize them in front of their co-workers. Be polite and calm.
- **Ask the person to leave** — if the person continues the behaviour, you may need to ask the person to leave. If you have to do this, make sure you talk to the person later in private. They might be more willing to discuss the problem without other people around.
- **When to walk away** — regroup, seek assistance, walk away.

- **People need to know how they're doing** — you can't expect someone to improve their performance if they are not aware what they are doing wrong (and right).
- **Motivation** — people get motivated from job satisfaction (things like doing a good job, being challenged, good relationships with co-workers and supervisors, etc.). People lose motivation from external factors (not enough pay, poor working conditions, etc.) You need to look at both of these areas to discover the root of a worker's problems.
- **State the problem in terms of behaviour** — if you are having a problem with a worker's performance, the first step is to talk to the worker in private. Tell the person what the problem is and how you perceive it. Be careful not to attack the person – don't be angry, threatening, or condescending. Concentrate on the outward behaviour – not on assumptions about their inner state of mind. Instead of saying, "You're lazy," say, "You did not finish the job."
- **Listen** — it's likely that after you have stated the problem, the person will tell you why it is happening and how it can be corrected. All you have to do is listen.
- **Make a plan** — once the problem (from both sides) has been identified, make a plan between the two of you that addresses the situation. If you can't do it yourself, involve the Supervisor.
- **Have a follow-up talk** — after an agreed amount of time, meet with the person again to see how things are going. Is the problem still continuing? If so, what can be done? Has the problem stopped? Let the person know that you are available if another problem arises. Ask them to talk to you about it before it gets serious again.

## Exercise 6 – Your Solutions To Difficult People

In small groups or as a class, discuss problems you have had and how they were (or could have been) solved. If your group cannot identify a specific situation, discuss the one below:

You are holding a one-hour training session with a group of workers. One worker arrives 10 minutes late and then proceeds to fall asleep. You ask him to wake up and participate in the session. He says, “Why should I bother to stay awake? Nothing ever gets accomplished anyway. I’m only here because I have to be.”

---



---



---

## Hints For Specific Activities

This section provides hints for specific activities that were discussed at the beginning of this module.

For some presentations, you may want to use visual aids. Visual aids are used to focus participants’ attention, reinforce your verbal message, stimulate interest, and illustrate hard to visualize information. Do not use visual aids to impress people, make more than one main point, or to present simple thoughts. Be careful not to clutter your presentation area. Visual aids must be clear and big enough for everyone to see. Here are some visual aids you might use:

- **Handouts** — give participants any written material they might need. For example, you might want to use a toolbox brochure during a toolbox talk. Handouts must be readable and not too complex.
- **Objects** — one of the best visual aids is to give a demonstration. For example, if you’re talking about dust masks, make sure you have a few at the meeting so you can show how they’re used and give participants a chance to practice.
- **Flip charts** — make sure you have enough paper. Write clearly and watch your position – don’t block the view. You may want to tape flip chart pages around the room.
- **Flip cards** — these cards are useful if your meeting is in a remote location or out on site. Field Level Risk Assessments.
- **Safe Work Practices**

- **Safe Job Procedures** — -these should always be available in your Health and Safety manual.

Mentoring works best if you encourage interaction. Discussions, questions, and practice all increase the amount of learning your participants will do. So, as much as possible, allow participants to ask questions and join in the process.

How do you deal with questions? You are not expected to have the answer to every question that might come up. Answer questions truthfully. If someone asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, tell them you don't know. Then, find the answer and be sure to get back to the person.

When asked a question, don't be afraid to pause before answering. This will give you a moment to give a clear answer.

If a question is unclear, ask for clarification. Be careful not to belittle people who ask silly questions. You want to encourage people to participate.

## Summary

People have a natural concern for health and safety, but safe work practices don't come naturally. Hazards are continually developing out of ignorance, error, familiarity, and inattention. Training is essential to counteract those influences and maintain a strong awareness of safety concerns.

A good training/mentoring program gives people information they need to understand safety issues and practices, teaches them how to perform tasks safely, and provides regular feedback on their safety practices. A good mentoring program will be comprehensive enough to maintain a strong concern for safety among all crew members; it will include a good balance of teaching and evaluation, and it will teach the "why's" of safety as well as the "what's".

To be most effective, the program will create an atmosphere in which safety is always taken seriously and every worker is held accountable. Yet the approach will be so consistent and so positive that workers will see safety as a protection and a challenge to rise to, not as a burden or a threat.

Note: a good place to find training films and handouts is at the ACSA libraries and website, and the Workplace Health and Safety library. As well, you may wish to consult other safety professionals for further suggestions on course materials.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





















