

# Eco-Safe Means People-Safe Sustainability Initiatives & Worker Risk Meeting Kit



## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Your workplace is going green – and that's a good thing. But new products, new equipment, and new ways of doing things can bring risks that nobody warned you about. Just because something is labeled 'eco-friendly' doesn't mean it's safe for you.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER

Sustainability changes happen fast. New chemicals, new machines, new procedures show up without much fanfare. And when workers aren't told what's different or what to watch for that's

when people get hurt.

### Green Doesn't Mean Harmless

Bio-based or 'natural' cleaning products can still irritate your skin, eyes, or lungs. Never skip the label just because something sounds safe.

### Solar and Energy Equipment

- Working near solar panels can mean live electrical systems
- Rooftop or elevated installs add fall risk
- New battery storage systems can overheat or vent harmful gas

### Recycling Stations

Recycling bins collect more than paper. Broken glass, chemical residue, and sharp metal edges can hide in containers that look harmless from the outside.

### Pressure to Skip PPE

Some workers assume that if a product is 'natural,' they don't need gloves or a mask. That assumption gets people hurt. Always wear the right protection, no exceptions.

### Unfamiliar Machinery

- Energy-saving equipment may work differently than what you know
- Controls, speeds, and emergency stops might be in new places
- Unfamiliar gear is where accidents happen most

# HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Staying safe while going green takes the same habits as any other change – awareness, training, and speaking up.

## Read Before You Use

- Check the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for any new product, even green ones – it tells you exactly what protective gear you need and what to do if you're exposed
- Look specifically for skin, eye, and breathing hazards in the SDS
- If you can't find the SDS for a new product, stop and ask your supervisor before using it this is not optional

## Get Trained on New Equipment

If new machinery or energy systems show up at your worksite, ask for a hands-on walkthrough before you touch them. Don't assume they work the same as the old one's controls, emergency stops, and power sources are often in completely different places on newer, energy-efficient models. If training hasn't been offered, ask for it. It's your right.

## Wear Your PPE – Every Time

Gloves, eye protection, and respirators don't care if a product is organic or synthetic. If the label says wear it, wear it. Even brief contact with a 'natural' irritant can cause lasting skin or lung damage. Make it a habit to put on your gear before you open any container, not after you've already started working.

## Handle Recycling with Care

- Always use gloves when sorting or moving recycling bins you can't see what's inside
- Never reach blindly into a bin or compactor
- If you find broken glass, hazardous containers, or chemical residue in a bin, report it right away and don't handle it bare-handed

## Speak Up When Something Feels Off

If a new process seems unsafe if you weren't trained on it, if the product seems too strong, if the equipment behaves in a way that doesn't feel right say something. Green changes should be good for everybody, including you. Raising a concern isn't slowing things down. It's doing your job properly.

## FINAL WORD

Going green is worth doing but not at the cost of your health or safety. Every sustainability change at work is a change you deserve to understand. Stay curious, ask questions, and keep your guard up.

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