Four Focus Items for Work Area Inspections Meeting Kits

FOUR FOCUS ITEMS FOR WORK AREA INSPECTION

Tool condition- Often times many tools are used way past their life cycle. Inspect all hand tools for broken handles, chipping, bending, or just improper functioning in general.

Organization of work area- The way we have a work area setup often does not change much even when there are better ways that it could be organized. Complacency often sets in when it comes to how we choose to organize tools, materials, and equipment. Take an honest look at how your work area is set up. Are there overhead hazards? Are heavy objects that need to be lifted from the floor repeatedly? Are important parts or materials getting dirty or damaged from where they are placed?

Trip hazards- Objects on the floor, objects hanging from shelves, and uneven ground are just a few common examples of trip hazards in the workplace. Trip hazards are some of the easiest hazards to completely eliminate from our work areas.

Hand hazards- Some common types of injuries to our hands include burns, cuts, crushed-by, and fractures. Hazards that cause these injuries can be found virtually anywhere in our workplaces. Pinch points, moving parts, unguarded equipment, hot surfaces, dropped objects, etc. are all hazards that should be looked at when addressing hand hazards during a work area inspection.

BOILER PLATE WORKPLACE HAZARDS

- **Safety hazards** such as those caused by inadequate machine guards, unsafe workplace conditions, unsafe work practices.
- **Biological hazards** caused by organisms such as viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites.
- **Chemical hazards** caused by a solid, liquid, vapour, gas, dust, fume or mist.
- **Ergonomic hazards** caused by physiological and psychological demands on the worker, such as repetitive and forceful movements, awkward postures arising from improper work methods, and improperly designed workstations, tools, and equipment.
- **Physical hazards** caused by noise, vibration, energy, weather, heat, cold, electricity, radiation and pressure.
- **Psychosocial hazards** that can affect mental health or well-being such as overwork, stress, bullying, or violence.

PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL FOR AN EFFECTIVE INSPECTION

What to Examine

Every inspection must examine **who, what, where, when and how.** Pay particular attention to items that are or are most likely to develop into unsafe or unhealthy conditions because of stress, wear, impact, vibration, heat, corrosion, chemical reaction or misuse. Include areas where no work is done regularly, such as parking lots, rest areas, office storage areas and locker rooms.

Inspections should be done prior to the start of work as well as periodically throughout the shift and at the end of the work task. Workplace inspections serve the purpose of identifying any hazards in a work area. After hazards are identified, they need to be corrected before work proceeds or continues. There can always additional hazards present in any work area that were not planned for.

INSPECTION TEAM

Health and safety committee members are obvious choices of personnel to carry out formal inspections, especially if they have received training or certification. Other criteria for selecting the inspection team.

- Knowledge of regulations and procedures
- knowledge of potential hazards
- experience with work procedures involved

Engineers, maintenance personnel, occupational hygienists, health and safety professionals, supervisors or managers may be a part of the inspection team.

INSPECTION PRINCIPLES

- Draw attention to the presence of any immediate danger – other items can await the final report.
- Shut down and “lock out” any hazardous items that cannot be brought to a safe operating standard until repaired.
- Do not operate equipment. Ask the operator for a demonstration. If the operator of any piece of equipment does not know what dangers may be present, this is cause for concern. Never ignore any item because you do not have knowledge to make an accurate judgement of safety.
- Look up, down, around and inside. Be methodical and thorough. Do not spoil the inspection with a “once-over-lightly” approach.
- Clearly describe each hazard and its exact location in your rough notes. Allow “on-the-spot” recording of all findings before they are forgotten. Record what you have or have not examined in case the inspection is interrupted.
- Ask questions, but do not unnecessarily disrupt work activities. This interruption may interfere with efficient assessment of the job function and may also create a potentially hazardous situation.
- Consider the static (stop position) and dynamic (in motion) conditions of the item you are inspecting. If a machine is shut down, consider postponing the inspection until it is functioning again.
- Consider factors such as how the work is organized or the pace of work and how these factors impact safety.
- Discuss as a group, “Can any problem, hazard or accident generate from this situation when looking at the equipment, the process or the environment?” Determine what corrections or controls are appropriate.
- Do not try to detect all hazards simply by relying on your senses or by looking at them during the inspection. You may have to monitor equipment to measure the levels of exposure to chemicals, noise, radiation or biological agents.

FINAL WORD

The foundation of a successful and effective investigation starts with strategic and thoughtful planning by all the stakeholders in the management and worker paradigm.