# Questions to Ask Before a Work Task Meeting Kit




## QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE WORK BEGINS

There are many questions that we need to ask or answer throughout a work day to get a job accomplished. The same can be said for working safely. There are many different questions we can ask ourselves and the other individuals involved in a work task to ensure we are working safely.

## THE RIGHT QUESTIONS FOR WORKERS TO ASK

Prior to starting a work task we should be running through checklists- whether it is an actual physical checklist or a mental checklist. No matter if the checklist is a physical one or a mental one, there is often a set of questions that need answered to double check that everything is in line prior to work beginning. Some examples of questions that can be asked:

- Do I understand the work task?
- Do I understand the hazards associated with the work?
- What can injure me?
- Do I have the necessary training needed for the task?
- Is all associated paperwork completed?
- Do I have all the tools needed to do the job?
- Are the right personnel involved in the task?

## THE ANSWERS

Asking these questions serves no purpose if there is no follow through with the information that comes from them. For example, if you find a deficiency in the paperwork needed to complete the work task then you need to stop work and get the necessary paperwork completed before proceeding.

Is it a simple phone call home before starting the task to get peace of mind? Is it changing the work area so that you are more easily able to focus on the work task? Regardless of the issue, find a solution prior to beginning work.

Common Hazards of Work Areas for Workers to Be Aware

Not only is productivity greatly affected when there is poor organization of a work area, but there can also be great safety risks. Some common hazards of poorly organized work areas include:

1. **Struck-by incidents-** Work areas that do not have any designated paths for personnel walking through or areas blocked off for specific work tasks such as grinding, create struck-by hazards can be particularly dangerous. Flying debris, lifting loads, and moving objects can all create struck-by hazards for anyone in the area.
2. **Slips, trips, and falls-** Objects on the ground due to poor organization or housekeeping create trip hazards for any walking through that area. Slippery surfaces due to moisture or other liquids such as oil can cause a slip or a fall. Uneven surfaces, steps, or unexpected drop-offs are also a common trip hazards.
3. **Caught in or between incidents-** Work areas that place people near moving parts or equipment is also a huge concern. Moving equipment such as belts or fans can grab a hold of a person's clothing or hair pulling them into the moving parts.
4. **Sprain/ Strain hazards-** Poor foresight or carelessness often leads to heavy or awkward objects being left on the floor or in a space that makes it difficult for someone to lift them up. These situations put individuals at risk for sprain and strain injuries which are some of the most common and costly injuries that occur in the workplace.
5. **Overhead hazards-** Poor organization leads to objects being hastily thrown on overhead shelves which leads to dropped object hazards as well as a struck-by hazard for someone working in the area.
6. **Risks to property-** When items are left everywhere or in the line of fire, damage to tools, equipment, or materials often occurs.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

The most important question is what is your **state of mind** prior to a task beginning. It is important to do a self-check to ensure you are able to complete your work to the best of your ability as well as safely as possible. Some questions to ask yourself:

- Am I stressed?
- Is my focus on the work task?
- Is fatigue, medication, or illness affecting my work?

## MORE PREVENTION BEFORE THE WORK

Work areas makes a huge impact on our ability to work safely as well as efficiently. All too often, our work areas are setup and not changed for long periods of time. **Complacency** often plays a factor in why our work areas are not changed for the better. Taking the time to evaluate work areas before work starts will help eliminate hazards can prevent an injury from occurring.

## BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST

- Maintain clean and clear walkways through a work area. Always have proper space for tools, materials, and equipment to avoid creating trip hazards as well as preventing property damage incidents. Never allow excess materials to take up space in walkways or in the path of forklifts.
- Always store heavy or awkward objects where they are easily accessible to be lifted, preferably by a piece of equipment such as a forklift when possible. Always think of the next person who may have to lift an object. It may be in a spot that creates an easy and safe lift for you, but could create a hazard for someone who is shorter than you.
- Never place objects that are improperly staged overhead, especially when moving equipment is in the area. A 10lb object stored on a high shelf can cause a serious injury to someone below if it falls off.

## FINAL WORD

The prudent action for any worksite that is preparing to initiate any new work is to have an actual physical checklist of the projected work.