



Transferring the "See Something, Say Something" Mentality to Your Workforce

Since 2010, the federal government has leveraged the "See Something, Say Something" program to proactively counter potential acts of terrorism by engaging citizens in their own safety. This concept can effectively be applied in the workplace, enhancing safety and increasing proactive hazard reporting. OSHA has already cultivated this concept by encouraging the American workforce to identify and report unsafe acts and conditions through Right-to-Know standards and whistleblower protections. In this article, we will explore how to adopt the "See Something, Say Something" mentality in your workforce.

See Something: Many OSHA standards include training requirements. The General Industry standard (1910) comprises 21 active subparts, 15 of which contain 63 standards related to training. Employers are not required to train employees on every standard, but on the standards specific to the potential hazards their workers are or could reasonably be exposed to.

Effective training plays a crucial role in preventing work-related injuries and illnesses. It not only bolsters compliance with standards, but also empowers workers to advocate for safe working conditions. According to OSHA, effective training includes the following elements:

- Provided in a language the worker understands.
- Interactive, allowing for questions and feedback.
- Includes checks on learning, such as hands-on assessments or periodic audits.
- Relevant to the job and comprehensive enough to reduce risk.
- Ensures workers understand the limitations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and can identify when it fails.

Through training and education, you empower your workers to act as a safety and health force multiplier on your site, identifying hazards and recommending improvements.

Say Something: OSHA's recordkeeping standard requires you to provide a method for employees to report workplace injuries and illnesses. The OSH Act also states that employees have the right and obligation to report unsafe acts. OSHA has already granted employees this right, and many inspections result from employee complaints because employees don't know how to report issues within the company. By developing an effective



internal reporting process, you can substantially reduce the likelihood of an OSHA inspection at your facility.

Simple actions such as walking among the workforce, observing their conditions, taking breaks with them, and listening to their concerns can increase trust and communication. If you have multiple shifts, drop in on those as well, both announced and unannounced. Provide an easy-to-follow, easy-to-submit process for employees to file internal complaints.

If there is a union, bring in the union representative and let them know you want to address their members' safety concerns. Form a safety committee made up of management and line workers, but don't forget the 2nd- and 3rd-shift crews. Whatever reporting methodology you choose, ensure you document the details each time it's used.

Fix Something: The "Broken Windows Theory" by Wilson and Kelling suggests that visible signs of disorder lead to more disorder. For example, if a building has one broken window, others will likely follow. This principle applies to workplace safety: addressing concerns promptly reinforces trust and encourages workers to report hazards.

Addressing every safety concern employees raise is vital. Immediate fixes should be prioritized, while longer-term issues should also be addressed systematically. Trust is easily lost and difficult to regain; therefore, cultivating a safety culture in which employees feel empowered to report issues and confident that the organization will act is crucial.

Transferring the See Something, Say Something, Fix Something mentality to your workforce can significantly enhance workplace safety and foster a culture of proactive hazard identification. By providing high-quality training that equips employees with knowledge and the right tools, you create an environment where they feel confident reporting unsafe acts and conditions without fear of repercussions. Implementing an effective internal reporting system is crucial for encouraging communication and addressing issues before they escalate, ultimately reducing the risk of injuries and illness.

Whether you're unsure how to start the conversation or afraid of what your employees might report, the Illinois On-Site Safety and Health Consultation Program can work with you to identify hidden hazards that may be present. The Illinois Department of Labor provides free consultation for small and medium-sized businesses, including on-site visits, program development, training, and even air and noise testing. This free service aims to help you develop a safer, more compliant workplace and may even reduce your workers' compensation costs. For more details,





visit <https://worksafe.illinois.gov> or contact Harry “Hap” Hileman at 217-993-2111 or harry.hileman@illinois.gov.

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