How to Fix Your Hazard Assessments to Make Them Work

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Speaker: Daniel Clark, Clark Health and Safety

Themes

-A complete hazard assessment program is a cornerstone to a safety management system. Having the documentation is place is compulsory for several safety certifications, but moreover it provides a structured, methodical approach to determining and addressing hazards.

-A fully realized hazard assessment program includes formal hazard assessments (AKA, Job Hazard Analysis (JHA), Job Safety Analysis (JSA), Task Safety Assessment (TSA), etc.) along with a site-specific complement (Field Level Hazard Assessment (FLHA), Site-Specific Hazard Assessment (SSHA)). The former is mostly to determine the hazards inherently related to a task, and the latter assesses the added hazards of a site or other conditions on the day of work.

-The way the above are usually completed creates a Venn diagram with a large intersection you could label ‘Rework’. The inefficiency and conducting these usually comes from a fundamental misunderstanding of the intention of each

exercise, which related to the delivery and application of training. Better training and a more complete understanding of the purpose across an organization can help improve this process.

‘ Poorly done hazard assessments are basically a waste of time, they do no work. Even worse, they may overlook many of the risks and make a task appear safer than it is in fact.

Bad approaches and how to fix them

1. Choosing the wrong controls ‘ Listing ‘PPE’ for the control of all types of hazards is woefully inadequate. PPE may be common to almost all tasks, but to require it without any definition of what PPE is useless. Even worse, listing PPE as a control where it will not mitigate the hazard. Entering a confined space, for example, is not made safe by unspecified PPE, there are a number of things that work together to make that task safe, and each needs to be documented in the hazard assessment. Controls should be selected on the basis of the hierarchy of control.

2. Not recognizing hazards ‘ Again, this often comes down to good training and continuous repetition. Workers that see hazards everyday can become blind to them, and start ‘risk discounting’: a cognitive tendency to perceive a hazard as being lower the longer it goes without causing an incident. This is a behavior that leads to things being overlooked with the attitude of ‘it’s been that way for a decade, it isn’t a problem’. Training and retraining by competent supervisors and safety personnel can help workers learn to better recognize hazards and make realistic estimations of the risk they pose.

3. Conflating hazards/near misses/deficiencies ‘ We can’t take part in a meaningful conversation about much of anything until we agree on the definitions. As long as they are internally consistent within an organization, we can discuss when and how

they apply.

4. Acknowledging the ‘pointlessness’ ‘ Management has a duty to provide a health and safety workplace, with all hazards mitigated. This is codified in the law (at least where I live). That means that where hazard assessments are not being done ‘ or are being done poorly ‘ management has been delinquent in their role as an employer. I’ve seen supervisors and managers taking the attitude that ‘I know this is a pain, but just do it, OK” Which will not get good results or lasting conformance. Safetyprofessionals and employers have to own the process, make it a requirement of employment, and underscore its importance (which means understanding themselves).

5. Slapping hazard assessments in a binder, and letting them collect dust ‘ Part of the process of hazard assessment is training, review, revision, and incorporation of new information. The process is basically a loss prevention strategy, which means it is a structured application of foresight, which is a flawed estimation at first. However, new information becomes available and allows employers to update risk levels and controls as they learn what does and doesn’t work. Collecting this input relies on hazard reporting, inspection, incident/near miss investigations, and review of the hazard assessments themselves.

About the Speaker

Daniel Clark is the founder and President of Clark Health and Safety Ltd., providing safety and quality consultation and auditing services across various industries in Calgary, Alberta starting in 2018. Prior to that, Daniel worked on implementing safety and quality management systems at various companies pursuing ISO or COR certification.

Daniel has a Bachelor of Science degree, certification in health and safety, certificates in both CAD design and CNC

operation, ISO 9001:2015 and 45001:2018 auditing certifications as well as certification to train other lead auditors in those frameworks through PECB. Additionally, Daniel has earned the professional designations of Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) and National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO) for his work in the safety industry, and is a Certified Quality Improvement Associate (CQIA) through the ASQ.

Being raised and practicing in Calgary, the heart of Canada's energy industry, most of Daniel's career has been connected to the safety and quality in the energy industry. He has performed safety and quality roles from field supervision to office-based administration and management. Daniel's consulting business has worked with organizations offering engineering services, restoration, industrial trades, recreation, pipeline, environmental, manufacturing and food processing.