

HAZWOPER Training — Changing a Workplace

Purposes:

To examine ways in which HAZWOPER training can be directly applied to making your workplace safer.

To determine what parts you can play in this important effort and then to decide if you will.

This Activity has two tasks.



Task 1

1. Your trainers will go through Factsheet 1 with you.
 - 1) As a full group, read the USW's definition of a near-miss in the box below. Then, based on your experiences in your workplace, brainstorm some examples of near-misses or hazards that are accidents or incidents waiting to happen. So, think about both near-misses and hazards. The trainers will scribe examples you give.

NEAR-MISS DEFINITION: An event in which one or more workers are exposed to a significant chance of harm but no harm occurs.

A situation that threatens the environment or property, even if there are no people present at the time.

While we are all in the mindset of thinking about near-misses and hazards that could become accidents or incidents, individually complete the next four steps (3 through 6):

3. Take a few minutes to think about recent near-misses or hazards that could become accidents or incidents in your work area or another work area.
4. Choose one near-miss or hazard and describe it.
5. Individually, fill out a near-miss reporting pocket form that the trainers will give you. Putting your name on it is optional. If you do put your name on it, that information will NOT go to the employer.
6. Hand in your pocket form.

Factsheet 1: Overview of Our Near-Miss Reporting Initiative to Make This Workplace Safer

As you saw in Activity 1, there's a lot from HAZWOPER training that we can apply to make things safer at our workplace. With that in mind, leaders from your local union (local union leadership, TOP Rep. [where applicable], health and safety reps., health and safety committee members and health and safety trainers) have developed a **health and safety action plan to increase reporting of near-misses and hazards**. This action plan also identifies key steps that we need to take to reach the goal of increasing near-miss and hazard reporting.

To reach this goal, we need the support and action of both local union leadership and the workforce.

NEAR-MISS DEFINITION: An event in which one or more workers are exposed to a significant chance of harm but no harm occurs.

A situation that threatens the environment or property, even if there are no people present at the time.

This Near-Miss Reporting Initiative is *NOT* about workers observing other workers and their behaviors. We are identifying near-misses and hazards, which have the potential to become accidents or incidents.

Hazards which have the potential to injure workers or cause damage are an important part of this initiative and need to be reported.

Factsheet 1: Overview of Our Near-Miss Reporting Initiative to Make This Workplace Safer *(continued)*

Near-Miss and Hazard Examples

Here are some examples of near-misses and hazards:

NEAR-MISS	HAZARD
Faulty valve almost sprayed a worker, but the worker jumped out of the way.	Faulty valve that could expose workers to dangerous chemicals.
Suspended load slips, although no one was hurt.	Suspended crane load in an unrestricted access area.
Worker tripped and almost fell on a raised area of a designated walkway.	Raised area in a designated walkway.

Near-Miss/Hazard Responsibilities:

In a nutshell, here are the responsibilities that workers and employers have related to near-misses and hazards:

Workers: *Report* near-misses and hazards.

Employers: *Fix or eliminate* hazards or conditions that are the sources of near-misses.

Near-Miss Reporting Pocket Form:

As part of making sure we meet our responsibilities, we have a new Near-Miss Reporting Pocket Form that makes it easy to report near-misses and hazards. The Pocket Form asks for:

- A short description of the near-miss or hazard;
- Any ideas on how to fix it; and
- The location of the situation.

The copy that goes to the employer will not have your contact information on it.

It takes about two minutes to fill out a Pocket Form which could make your workplace safer.

Task 2

Your trainers will go through Factsheet 2 with you.

Your trainers will review the “Big Push” handout on the pages that follow. Your trainer will also do a summary of the Near-Miss Reporting Initiative Plan that the Leadership Team developed and that you can add to.

Your trainers will now go over the “My Contribution” sheet (page 45) with you, which is based on the handout we just reviewed. If you have any other suggestions of ways workers can be involved, please let us know.

On your own and then as a full group:

- 1. Working *individually*, select one or two activities you will commit to.**
- 2. Fill out the “My Contribution” sheet. As you can see, something like signing up for number 1 is just saying you’ll report near-misses and hazards; it’s not getting more involved than that.**
- 3. During the report-back, your trainer will have each person who made a commitment say what they intend to do.**
- 4. Hand in your “My Contribution” sheet to a trainer.**

Factsheet 2: Our Near-Miss Reporting Initiative Plan

Thank you for reporting on the near-misses and hazards that you brainstormed today. Our Near-Miss Initiative Coordinator will submit them, track them and provide feedback.

We are all learning about safety, but there's often a gap between what we know and what we do. We all know there are many, many not-yet-reported near-misses and hazards we are surrounded with every day. Some of these we don't even notice anymore because they just blend into the landscape after we see them or "work around" them for so long.

At any time, hazards or near-misses can become accidents or incidents. No hazards are trivial.

We believe that workers are in the best position to bring these issues to the attention of the employer. The Leadership Team has taken the step of coming up with an action plan focusing on reporting near-misses and hazards. The idea here is to take our safety training and apply it to make things safer.

We are looking for your feedback and commitment to be a part of this.

USW Makes Big Push to Increase Reporting of Near-Misses and Hazards

The union's goal:

To significantly increase the number of near-misses and hazards identified and reported.

A near-miss is:

- 1) An event in which one or more workers are exposed to a significant chance of harm but no harm occurs.
- 2) A situation that threatens the environment or property, even if there are no people present at the time.

Why near-misses are so important:

- Before most serious accidents, there are near-misses that either caused minor harm or no harm. We should see these as warning signs.
- All incidents and near-misses are based on uncontrolled hazards — the root problem.
- So, we must recognize that hazards have the potential to become near-misses or incidents.
- Often, the hazards we accept as normal are the most dangerous.

Why reporting near-misses is so important:

- Unaddressed near-misses lead to harm to workers, the environment and property.

- Incidents often happen when a number of hazards come together in unexpected ways. To prevent these, we must learn from and correct the hazards that have the potential to become near-misses or incidents.
- Workers, their union and its representatives play a key role in identifying and reporting near-misses and hazards.
- Workers and union representatives also play an important role in recommending fixes that can best either eliminate the hazard or control it in the safest way possible.
- It's also the union's job to push for the safest fixes and to monitor the issues until the employer resolves them. It's the employer's job to eliminate or fix the hazards.

Our Local's plan: How we'll get to our goal *with your help*:

1. Report near-misses and hazards.
2. Encourage other workers to report near-misses and hazards.
3. Report near-misses and hazards on behalf of other workers.
4. Report key information related to near-misses and hazards to union health and safety reps., trainers, stewards and committee members.

Spontaneous Near-Miss Reporting

We would like to use today's class as an opportunity to begin reporting near-misses at our workplace. As we go through the different activities today, think about hazards or conditions that might cause incidents or accidents to happen at your workplace. When you identify one, shout out "Near-Miss." The trainer will then provide you with one of the Near-Miss Reporting forms discussed in this Activity. Fill it out. At the end of the class the trainer will collect all that have been filled out during the course of the class.

