Recognizing Hazards

No one wants to be injured on the job, but it sometimes happens on construction sites. One common reason for this is, hazards aren’t always recognized as a hazard that’s why it is important to identify hazards so steps can be taken to protect workers.

A hazard is a situation, task or object that has the potential to cause injury.

Hazards are not always obvious. Recognizing a hazard is the first step in controlling it. Some things that help you recognize hazards are:

- Construction experience
- Health and Safety Training
- Having knowledge of company policies and OSHA regs (What you learn in training)
- Asking co-workers and supervisors what they think.
- Remember that health hazards such as asbestos and silica are hazards.
- Make a pre-task plan at the beginning of the shift. (This will help you identify hazards)

Assessing Hazards

Assessing hazards means to evaluate their significance. When you have identified a hazard, assess its extent and severity.

- Determine the seriousness of the hazard and the urgency in fixing it.
- Examine which workers can be exposed to the hazard, and for how long.
- Ask yourself how the hazard will be affected by other conditions such as; weather, heavy equipment or more activity in the area.

Eliminating or Protecting Employees from Hazards

Eliminating the hazard should be your first choice. If that isn’t possible or feasible then steps must be taken to protect the worker.

- Eliminate the hazard, ie: Trip hazards due to poor housekeeping ... Clean it up Extreme noise ... Use quieter equipment or, if possible move the loud equipment farther from the work area.
- Protect using PPE, for example: Extreme noise ... Ear plugs or Muffs, Silica or other respiratory hazards ... Respirators (Don’t forget respiratory evaluation and fit testing)
- Identify the best-practice safety rules that apply to the hazard.

Points to Take With You:

- Recognize the hazard; evaluate your work area and work procedures.
- Assess the hazard; can you work around it? How dangerous is the hazard? Will it become worse?
- Try to eliminate the hazard first, and then use PPE to protect from the hazard.