

Learn to Think S.A.F.E.

Learn to use the S.A.F.E. approach to assess possible hazards in the workplace. This approach can be used in the workspace and adapted to everyday life.

No matter what job you are doing, safety is a thought process. So think S.A.F.E., which stands for See, Assess, Fix, and Evaluate. Taking a few moments to think through your task can save a lifetime of pain and regret.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

There are Standard Operating Procedures for each task you perform in the workplace. Before you start work, if you don't remember these procedures, review them. Then use the S.A.F.E. thought process to assess possible hazards and prepare to work safely.

See the hazards. A hazard is anything that may cause damage, harm or adverse health effects to something or someone under certain conditions.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG

A company trying to continue its five-year perfect safety record showed workers a film aimed at encouraging the use of safety goggles on the job. Unfortunately, the gory incidents depicted by the film were so graphic that three workers suffered minor injuries in their rush to leave the screening room, four others fainted, and one man required two stitches after a fainting coworker fell on him.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

See the hazards. A hazard is anything that may cause damage, harm or adverse health effects to something or someone under certain conditions.

EXAMPLES OF HAZARDS AND THEIR EFFECTS:

Workplace Hazard	Example of Hazard	Example of Harm Caused
Thing	Knife	Cut
Substance	Diesel fuel	Burns, fire
Material	Asbestos	Mesothelioma
Source of energy	Electricity	S h o c k , electrocution
Condition	Wet floor	Slips, falls
Process	Welding	Metal fume fever
Practice	L i v e s t o c k handling	T r a m p l i n g , getting kicked or crushed

Assess the risk from the hazards. "Risk" is a measure of how likely it is that an incident will occur and the expected severity of injuries. Risk is rated as either being high, medium or low. By assessing and rating the risks, you can prioritize hazards that need immediate action over those that can be monitored and fixed later.

Fix the hazard. There's a specific order for controlling hazards, as listed below. Many controls are a combination of two or more control types:

- **Elimination:** such as no longer performing a high-risk task or using high-risk equipment.
- **Substitution:** such as using a less toxic chemical or a less noisy piece of equipment.
- **Engineering:** such as ensuring that a hazardous piece of machinery is equipped with guards.
- **Administration:** such as posting warning signs, writing safe work procedures or altering timing of tasks.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** such as ensuring that you are using hearing protection, safety glasses, safety shoes, etc.

FINAL WORD

After the appropriate control measures have been taken, monitor the situation and ensure that the actions taken are not creating additional risks. If further control measures are needed, inform your supervisor immediately. ■

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What does S.A.F.E. stand for?
 - a. Safe, Americans, Forever, Evolve
 - b. Safety, Assess, Fix, Exit
 - c. Start, All, Find, Evaluate
 - d. See, Assess, Fix, Evaluate
2. "Risk" is a measure of how likely an incident is to occur and the expected severity of the injuries that could result.

True False
3. "Wet floor" an example of a hazard.

True False
4. "Thing" is one of seven types of workplace hazards.

True False
5. Every workplace is required to have its own "Standard Operating Procedures."

True False

What Would You Do?

You are working in a warehouse with slick floors. Your co-worker is eating a banana. He tosses the peel over his shoulder and saunters away. What would you do?
