

Plan Your Work, Work Your Plan: What I've Learned About JHA's

by Joel Flowers

Very early on in my career as a Safety Manager, I attended a Safety Forum that would shape my view of what really works in preventing accidents. I'll never forget listening to a peer tell his story about two employees losing their lives on different jobs in the span of a year. While that fact should strike fear in the heart of any safety person, what he said afterward has rung in my ears since that day. He related that what really turned things around for his company was the development of an effective Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) program. As he explained how it had been such a success in improving the employees' safety record, a light went on in my head. This is what I had been looking for!



An effective Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) is not rocket science, but it must be appropriate to the tasks that your employees will be performing. While my previous experience in safety management was in construction, I currently work with union millwrights who work with steel, not wood or other building materials. To develop an effective JHA that these employees could relate to, I needed to take the time to observe the tasks that they perform. After all, the JHA starts with what the job or task is. It was only after several months of intense observation that I could begin to develop an appropriate Job Hazard Analysis for this work environment.

Depending on who you work for, your JHA may have other names, such as a Pre-Task Plan, Job Safety Analysis or Activity Hazard Analysis. How you label it doesn't matter as much as how you execute it. As everyone responsible for safety knows, documentation can certainly save us after an incident or if OSHA drops by our jobsite, something we emphasize constantly to frontline supervision who are tasked with completing the paperwork. However, when it comes to a JHA, we need to stress to our team leaders that if they are running a crew, it is imperative that all members of the crew should be involved in the process.

The basic concept of an effective Job Hazard Analysis establishes and answers 3 questions: (1) What is the task that I will be performing? (2) What could hurt or injure me while performing that work? (3) What will I do to prevent or mitigate that hazard so that I don't get injured? The more people involved in this process and giving their input, the more awareness there will be throughout the workday. JHA's work best when they are completed via a team discussion.

There is so much to say about this subject, but here are a couple reminders that I have learned over the years about an effective JHA. If the workers can occasionally see the JHA throughout the day, it becomes more set in their minds while performing their tasks. Some construction companies encourage the use of a whiteboard JHA. That visual reminder of the hazards and controls on the whiteboard posted near their gang box or other location increases greater awareness throughout the day. Finally, sometimes the hazard is not so obvious, or tangible. When you get to the root cause of an accident and if the injured employee is honest, you may discover that the real cause is that they momentarily lost their focus, let their mind drift onto a personal problem, were unnecessarily rushing or being reckless, experiencing fatigue, taking a short cut or any number of other reasons related to human error. So, talk about those types of hazards when discussing the JHA, not just the physical hazards.

A well-executed Job Hazard Analysis can help reduce incidents and accidents. It's not a guarantee that you will never have another incident, but it increases awareness throughout the workday. It makes your workers feel safer, which in turn promotes greater production. So, plan your work and work your plan! Make a great JHA work for you!

To learn more about safety and health management, I recommend [OSHA 7500 Introduction to Safety and Health Management](#) offered through the OSHA Training Institute Education Center at Chabot-Las Positas Community College District. This introductory course addresses the four core elements of an effective safety and health program with strategies and techniques that are critical to each element's proper management and allows student to learn valuable pointers from their peers.

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The OSHA Training Institute Education Center at Chabot-Las Positas Community College District has been authorized by OSHA since 2008 to deliver high quality OSHA standards-based training for construction, maritime, disaster site and general industries at our San Francisco Bay Area (Pleasanton) location as well as other locations in Northern, Central and Southern California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii, Guam and American Samoa. *The recommendations in this article are advisory in nature, informational in content, and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace.* For information on OSHA Standards and Regulations, visit <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/industry>. For more information about the OSHA Training Institute Education Center at Chabot-Las Positas Community College District, [visit our website](#) or email otc@clpccd.org.