Five short safety talks, one useful discussion at a time

A six-page PDF pack: this guide plus five one-page crew discussions. Choose the topic that fits the work. Do not run the pack as a generic five-day compliance course.

Choose the right page

Pages 2-6: material handling and storage; heat and cold stress; slips, trips and falls; ladder safety; PPE. Review the selected handout, its source links, the workplace procedures and any manufacturer instructions before use. Ask a qualified person about gaps you cannot settle.

Before the talk: make it local

Walk the work area. Write down today's task, the actual hazard and the controls already required. Check what changed since the last shift. Bring a relevant photo or item only if it can be shown safely. Make the discussion understandable to the crew, including language and literacy needs.

During the talk: ask, show, check

Use the handout as a prompt, not a script to rush through. Ask workers where the hazard is here and what would make the job safer. Point out the selected controls and have workers explain the next step in their own words. Do not perform a hazardous demonstration.

Before work: turn comments into action

Record the problem, the action needed, the person responsible and when it will be checked. Do not use a signed sheet to wave through an unresolved hazard. Get required instruction, equipment or review before the affected work starts.

After the talk: check back

Check whether the action happened and whether the control works in practice. Revisit the topic when the task, conditions or controls change. Five minutes is a planning aid, not a maximum: allow time to answer questions and confirm understanding.

A simple closeout record

Task / location / topic: _____

Hazard or crew concern: _____

Action / person responsible: _____

Recheck time / result: _____

Need attendance records?

Use the separate blank talk template and sign-in sheet. Attendance alone does not prove competence or that a training requirement has been met. This pack is not an OSHA-approved course, site-specific hazard assessment or substitute for required training.

Basis and limits

Presenter approach informed by Toolbox Talks: Insights for Improvement (construction research) and Business.govt.nz: Giving health and safety talks (communication guidance, not U.S. law). Each topic page carries its own sources and scope. Reviewed November 3, 2026.

General safety information only. Verify current requirements for the work and location. The heat/cold page includes emergency-response warnings; read those before use.

Material handling and storage

Before the move: a short toolbox talk for today's job

Discuss manual handling, clear travel routes and stable storage. Crane, rigging and powered-truck work need their own task-specific procedures and required training.

1. Plan the move

Name the load, destination and handling method. Check its size, grip and stability, carrying distance, awkward reaches and repeated lifts. Can a layout change or suitable handling equipment reduce manual lifting?

2. Clear the route and landing area

Keep aisles and passageways clear and in good repair. Allow safe equipment clearance at doors, turns and loading docks. Identify pedestrian routes, obstructions and where the load will be set down. Do not start with an obstructed route.

3. Make storage stable

Secure tiered materials against sliding or collapse. Check rack and shelf condition and load limits. Report damaged racking and isolate the affected area. In construction, stored loads must also stay within the maximum safe load limits of floors.

4. Stop when conditions change

Stop if a load shifts, the route becomes blocked or storage looks unstable. Have the supervisor review the plan before restarting. Do not improvise a lift or try to catch falling materials.

Ask the crew

- What is today's most difficult load, and can we avoid lifting it manually?
- Where could someone be struck, trapped or exposed to falling materials?
- Which route and storage area will we use? Who will fix hazards before the move?

Make it specific to this job

Task / load: _____

Route / storage area: _____

Hazard / action / person responsible: _____

_____

Sources and limits

General industry: 29 CFR 1910.176. Construction: 29 CFR 1926.250. Practical guidance: OSHA Warehousing: Hazards and Solutions. Sources apply to different work settings; check the rules for your operation. Links are clickable. Reviewed November 3, 2026.

General safety information only. This discussion aid does not replace required training, a site-specific hazard assessment, employer procedures or qualified advice. Attendance is not proof of competence.

Resources and separate attendance sheet: toolboxtalk.com/toolbox-talk-template/

Heat and cold stress

Choose the controls for today's conditions

Review the employer's temperature-exposure plan, required PPE and emergency arrangements. Heat hazards can occur indoors or outdoors. Cold stress can occur above freezing, especially when clothing is wet.

Cold-weather work

Wear loose-fitting layers suitable for the task, insulated gloves and footwear, and protection from wind and rain. Bring dry replacement clothing. Identify a warm, dry break area and plan frequent recovery breaks. Consider scheduling demanding work for the warmer part of the day. Use a buddy system; report shivering, poor coordination, confusion or unusual behavior.

Heat-exposed work

Make cool drinking water easy to reach and encourage frequent drinking, not only when thirsty. OSHA recommends access to electrolyte-containing fluids for work lasting two hours or more. Identify shade or another cool recovery area. Increase break length and frequency as heat stress rises. Workload, environment and required clothing all matter. New or returning heat-exposed workers need a gradual increase in exposure and extra support.

Heat emergency: call 911 and cool immediately

Confusion, slurred speech or unconsciousness are signs of heat stroke. Call 911 immediately. Move the worker to a cooler area and begin active cooling with cold water or ice while waiting for help. Stay with the worker. Do not wait to decide which heat illness it is. When in doubt, cool the worker and call 911.

Cold emergency: get urgent help

If hypothermia is suspected and the worker is confused, has poor coordination or is getting worse, call 911 immediately. Move the worker to a warm place, replace wet clothes with dry clothes and cover the body, head and neck with blankets without covering the face. Follow dispatch instructions. For suspected frostbite, protect the area, do not rub it and seek medical help; do not try to rewarm it before getting medical help.

Ask the crew before starting

- Where are our water, recovery area and dry replacement clothing?
- Who checks each worker, and how do we report symptoms?
- Who calls 911? What is our exact location and access route?
- What change in conditions means stop and review the plan?

Record today's plan

Task / conditions: _____

Controls / person responsible: _____

Emergency location / access: _____

Sources and limits

OSHA guidance: Cold Stress Guide; Water. Rest. Shade.; Heat-Related Illnesses and First Aid. Clickable links. Reviewed November 3, 2026. Check current federal, state and local requirements and employer procedures for the actual job. These prompts are not temperature limits.

General safety information only. This discussion aid does not replace required training, a site-specific hazard assessment, medical advice or emergency care. Attendance is not proof of competence.

Separate attendance sheet: toolboxtalk.com/toolbox-talk-template/

Slips, trips and falls

Check the walking route before work starts

A short discussion about same-level walking hazards. This is not a complete fall-protection plan for work at height.

1. Walk the route in your mind

Name the route to the work area, storage and exits. What changed since the last shift? Check for spills, leaks, tracked-in water, ice, debris, loose boards and uneven flooring. Identify stairs and places where loads block the view.

2. Fix the hazard, not just the warning

Arrange safe cleanup or repair. Do not handle an unknown or hazardous spill without the required procedure, training and equipment. Under OSHA 1910.22, correct hazards before the surface is used again. If that cannot happen immediately, guard the hazard to prevent use until it is corrected. Agree on a safe alternative route.

3. Keep the route clear and visible

Plan where materials, waste and equipment go so they do not obstruct passage. Construction housekeeping rules require debris, including scrap lumber with protruding nails, to be kept clear of work areas, passageways and stairs. Report poor lighting; use a safe route.

4. Use stairs without rushing

Use handrails and keep a clear view ahead. If a bulky load blocks the view, get help or change the handling plan. Recheck the route after cleaning, deliveries or changing weather.

Ask the crew

- Where is our most likely slip or trip hazard today?
- Who will arrange the fix, and how will people be kept out until it is safe?
- What safe alternative route will we use? When will we recheck?

Make it specific to this job

Route / hazard: _____

Action / person responsible: _____

Temporary protection / recheck time: _____

Sources and limits

General industry: OSHA 1910.22. Construction housekeeping: OSHA 1926.25. Practical controls: OSHA Hospitals eTool. Standards apply to different settings; check the rules for your operation. Under 1910.22, structural repairs must be performed or supervised by a qualified person. Links are clickable. Reviewed November 3, 2026.

General safety information only. This aid does not replace required training, a site-specific assessment, employer procedures or qualified advice. An attendance signature is not proof of competence.

Separate attendance sheet: toolboxtalk.com/toolbox-talk-template/

Before the first ladder climb

A short ladder safety toolbox talk for today's task

Decide whether this ladder, in this condition and location, suits the work. Follow the manufacturer's instructions, employer procedures and the rules for your operation.

1. Choose the ladder and work method

Read the labels. Check intended use, length and load rating. Include the worker, tools, equipment and materials in the load. Do not exceed the rating or use boxes or barrels to gain height. If the task needs overreaching or an unstable setup, stop and have the supervisor choose a safer method.

2. Inspect and remove defects from service

Check rails, steps or rungs, feet, connections, locks and spreaders. Check for slippery material. Identify a defective ladder, remove it from service and report it. Do not improvise a repair. General industry: inspect before initial use each shift and more often as needed. Construction: a competent person inspects periodically and after an event that could affect safe use.

3. Check the location

Use stable, level support; keep access clear and protect against displacement by traffic or work. Check electrical hazards before moving or raising the ladder. Do not use metal ladders near power lines or exposed energized equipment. A nonconductive ladder is not permission to enter an electrical danger area.

4. Set up and climb as designed

Do not use a stepladder leaned or partly closed, or stand on its top or top step. Review extension-ladder angle, access and securing requirements before work. Face the ladder, keep three points of contact while climbing and keep tools out of your hands. Do not carry a load that could upset balance. Do not shift a ladder with a person or equipment on it; climb down and reposition instead of overreaching.

Ask the crew

- Why is this ladder right for the task? What defect means do not use?
- What could move the ladder or expose it to electricity here?
- How will tools reach the work area without occupying our hands while climbing?

Make it specific to this job

Task / ladder / location: _____

Inspection / action needed before use: _____

Person responsible / recheck: _____

Sources and limits

General industry: OSHA 1910.23. Construction: OSHA 1926.1053. Practical guidance: OSHA Portable Ladder Safety QuickCard. Check the standard that applies to the work. Links are clickable. Reviewed November 3, 2026.

General safety information only. This aid does not replace required ladder training, a site-specific assessment, employer procedures or manufacturer instructions. Attendance is not proof of competence.

Specialist talks and PDFs: toolboxtalk.com/basic-ladder-safety-toolbox-talk/

PPE: check protection before work

Start with the task, not a generic equipment list

What hazards remain after the other controls are in place? Confirm the protection the employer selected for this task. One item does not protect against every hazard.

1. Match protection to the hazard and worker

Review the employer's selection and manufacturer instructions. Confirm what PPE is needed, when to wear it, how it should fit and its limitations. Check that the combination works together. If the task, exposure or equipment changes, stop and ask for a review before continuing.

2. Check condition and fit

Check for damage, contamination, missing parts and other reasons not to use the equipment under its instructions. Do not use defective or damaged PPE. Report it and get suitable replacement protection before the work. Do not improvise a modification to make it fit.

3. Demonstrate proper use

Have the worker show how to put on, adjust, wear and remove the selected PPE. Ask about limitations, care, storage and when to replace or discard it. Under general-industry OSHA 1910.132(f), affected workers must demonstrate understanding and proper use before work requiring the covered PPE. A discussion or attendance signature alone does not establish that requirement has been met.

4. Know this discussion's limits

General-industry 1910.132(d) and (f) cover specified PPE rules. They do not replace separate respiratory-protection or electrical-protective-equipment requirements. Construction has its own rules, including 1926.95. This is not a respirator program, fit test, electrical-protection procedure or fall-protection course.

Ask the crew

- What hazard does each selected item protect us from today?
- Does it fit and work with the other equipment we must wear?
- What damage means stop using it? Where do we get replacements?

Make it specific to this job

Task / hazard / selected PPE: _____

Fit or condition issue / action before work: _____

Person responsible: _____

Sources and limits

General industry: OSHA 1910.132. Construction: OSHA 1926.95. Check the rules for the work and selected equipment. Links are clickable. Reviewed November 3, 2026.

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Category resources: ToolboxTalk.com PPE resources. Separate attendance sheet: toolboxtalk.com/toolbox-talk-template/