

October 2016. Effective safety communication maintains a focus on safety. Follow the suggestions provided to foster such communication.

Effective safety communication is not a “once and done” procedure, rather a component of the workplace that is part of daily operations. Here are a few tips to establish and maintain effective safety communication, as important to the workplace as personal protective or other piece of equipment essential to a task.

There are a number of formats for communication, such as toolbox talks, short but frequent supervisor- or worker-led meetings, pre-task planning sessions, communication one-on-one within work groups, and orientations when the tasks/people in the work area change. No matter the means and methods, effective communication can be facilitated by:

- Listening. The best communicators are the best listeners. This includes not only listening to words spoken but understanding what is being done around you, the needs of others and the overall working environment. Responding with reassuring phrases such as, “I see,” “OK,” “I understand,” is important. Everyone must ask questions if something is unclear and avoid preconceived ideas/close mindedness.
- Body Language. Body language is a vital component of communication. When delivering safety messages use assertive body language and maintain direct eye contact. Avoid closed or threatening postures such as leaning forward, getting within the personal space of others, crossing your arms in front of you, putting your hands on your hips to make you appear “larger,” and so on. Pay attention to the body language of others as you are listening to their words or they are listening to your words.
- Be Respectful. Do not appear impatient or interrupt when communicating with or listening to others. Do not insult, scream, raise your voice, or belittle others while correcting incorrect safety procedures. Stay calm.

The bottom line is to listen with all your senses for clues to the thoughts and emotions expressed by the body language and voice of others. Also pay attention to yourself so your personal experiences don't color what you are hearing/seeing. By being an active listener you can reduce misunderstandings. Modeling the three points above help others adopt the same behavior.

Lancour, Dana G. "Barton Malow Toolbox Talks." *Build It Safe - No Exceptions*. p. 7
May 2015. Web. 24 Aug. 2016. Toolbox Talking Points.

<http://www.bartonmalow.com/documents/Safety-Week-Toolbox-Talk-1.pdf>