

SafeSupervisor

Newsletter

Your front-line manager safety resource since 1929

AUGUST 2026



This Month's Highlights

This month, keep your safety training fresh and effective with practical strategies to turn claims and near misses into learning opportunities, engage workers through better presentations, use badges the right way, and explore four new ready-to-use Safety Talks. Read more highlights inside, and visit ilt.safetynow.com to view the full articles.



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Loss Prevention

Using Claims and Near Miss Data to Build Smarter Safety Training

A lot of safety training is built around a calendar. January is slips and falls. February is lockout. March is ergonomics. The topics may be important, but the calendar often moves independently from the organization's actual loss experience.

That is a missed opportunity. Every near miss, injury, workers' compensation claim, return-to-work delay, supervisor observation, and modified duty challenge contains information. It reveals not just what happened, but what task was being performed, what pressures existed, what shortcuts had become normal, what supervisors missed, and what delayed recovery.

That information should not stay trapped in incident reports or claims files. It should feed back into training.

That is the loss prevention training loop. It connects what is happening in the workplace with what is being taught, reinforced, and measured, turning safety training into a system that responds to real exposures.

Workers pay more attention when training reflects incidents they recognize. Supervisors engage more when behaviour targets are specific. Executives are more likely to support training when it is linked to claim costs, severity, productivity, and operational disruption.

Why the Loop Matters

Workers' compensation costs are shaped not only by whether injuries occur, but also by how quickly they are reported, how supervisors respond, whether modified work is offered early, and whether similar hazards continue to repeat.

That means safety training has a role before and after an injury. Before an injury, training should help workers recognize hazards, avoid shortcuts, and report concerns early. After an injury, it should help supervisors respond appropriately, support return to work, and prevent recurrence.

The Institute for Work & Health has reported that workplace prevention programs can reduce injuries, illnesses, and workers' compensation claims, while disability management and return-to-work programs can improve claim and cost outcomes.

A Lifting Program that Missed the Real Issue

One company experienced repeated back and shoulder strain claims. The safety team refreshed lifting training and reminded workers to use proper body mechanics.

The claims continued.

When the safety manager reviewed claims,

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near misses, supervisor observations, and return-to-work records together, a different picture emerged. Most injuries occurred late in the shift when workers were rushing to finish orders. Several involved awkward reaches into deep containers. Workers often mentioned discomfort before filing claims, while supervisors delayed offering modified duties because they were unsure what work could be assigned.

Training changed accordingly. Workers still learned proper lifting techniques, but the focus shifted to late-shift fatigue, awkward reaches, early discomfort reporting, using equipment before pain developed, and early supervisor intervention.

Claims identified the pattern. Near misses explained the behaviour. Return-to-work data revealed the escalation problem. Training addressed the real loss driver.

Better Questions Produce Better Training

The loop begins when safety leaders stop asking only, “*What happened?*” and instead ask, “*What does this teach us?*”

Claims, near misses, supervisor observations, worker feedback, and return-to-work records each reveal part of the story. Together they identify where the system is breaking down and where training should focus.

Near misses should also be treated as leading indicators. OSHA and CCOHS describe leading indicators as proactive measures that identify hazards before injuries occur. Rather than treating near misses as paperwork, organizations should use them to identify training needs before claims become costly.

Return-to-Work Belongs in the Training Conversation

Return to work is often treated as an HR or disability management function, but it also reveals training gaps. If workers delay reporting pain, supervisors respond poorly to early discomfort, or employees return only to become reinjured, those are training issues.

Research consistently shows that disability management and return-to-work practices influence claim duration, costs, and recovery outcomes. Training should therefore include early reporting, constructive supervisor responses, modified work, and safe reintegration—not simply injury prevention.

The Five Sources of the Loop

An effective loss prevention training loop combines claims data, incident and near miss reports, supervisor observations, worker feedback and return-to-work and modified duty information.

Viewed together, these sources produce targeted training rather than generic awareness sessions. The key is translating claim patterns into specific learning objectives by identifying the task, behaviour, audience, and training method needed to address the underlying cause.

Supervisors reinforce training every day. They observe whether behaviours change, whether shortcuts return, and whether barriers remain. Workers explain what the data cannot—why safe choices are difficult, awkward, slow, or unclear.

When employees see their feedback reflected in training, participation improves. Near miss reporting also increases because workers recognize that reporting leads to learning rather than paperwork.

Using Quotations to Enliven Your Safety Training Presentations

"He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lampposts, for support rather than illumination."

This observation from English scholar Andrew Lang works equally well for quotations. The device of quoting some famous person is typically used to introduce or support a premise made in a presentation, sales pitch, or advertisement—the way I just did in introducing this article. But if you're using them solely in that context, you could be overlooking an illuminating aid. Quotations are indispensable tools in crafting presentations, both at the brainstorming stage and in authoring. Here's an example of how to use them for preparing and delivering safety training.



From Quote to Topic

A few years ago, I was asked to make a short presentation at a three-day regional conference where the theme was "Success in the 2020s."

To get the creative juices flowing, I pulled out a copy of my favorite book of quotations and searched the section on success quotes. I came across these words of wisdom by John Charles Salak:

"Failures are divided into two classes: those who thought and never did, and those who did and never thought."

I chose a more novel approach to set my presentation apart from the other presenters. Starting with the quote's single germ of an idea, I developed a presentation called, "Three Guaranteed Ways to FAIL in the '20s or any Other Decade."

Building on the Idea

From there, ideas flowed. Using Salak's quote as a starting point, I came up with three—rather than two—types of failures and addressed each of them in the form of a "sleep" metaphor:

Dreamers

These are the ones who think but never do. Dreamers are the Walter Mittys who have all kinds of grandiose ideas and brainstorm, but never follow through due to procrastination, lack of self-confidence, etc.

Sleepwalkers

At the other end of the spectrum are the people who do but never think. These are the Ralph Kramdens of the world who run with an idea without thinking it through or putting in the necessary planning and preparation.

Zombies

These are the ones who neither think nor do. I can't prove it, but I suspect a demographic survey would reveal that this segment of the population consists largely of people who watch too many TV infomercials. Zombies simply wander through life without any specific goals, aim or purpose.

Simply Unique

I then found other quotations on the subjects of procrastination, planning, goal-setting, and so forth. So, in my own way, I addressed many of the same issues the other speakers did, but from a different frame of reference. And it was this approach, initially fueled by one solitary quotation, that ultimately made my presentation unique.

Best of all, though, my presentation almost wrote itself. What would probably have taken many hours if not days, took only a few hours. And my presentation, I'm certain, was infinitely better because of it.

In fact, this program turned out to be the best-attended and highest-rated of the conference and I give much of the credit to Mr. Salak. His noteworthy and succinct observation saved me immeasurable hours of development time.

Conclusion

I'll close with this advice from English clergyman and writer Charles Caleb Colton, "When in reading we meet with any maxim that may be of use, we should take it for our own, and make an immediate application of it, as we would of the advice of a friend whom we have purposely consulted."

Look at quotations in a new light. You'll find that Samuel Johnson was right, "Classical quotation is the parole of literary men all over the world."

By Mark D. Hansen, CPE, CSP, PE, CPEA



Don't Miss
Our Upcoming
Webinar

What Happens After the Incident

Save Your Seat

**Wednesday,
September 2, 2026
at 9:00 a.m. Pacific**

Safety Talk

Pandemic After-Effects: Infectious Disease Risk Beyond COVID

Infectious disease risks didn't end with COVID; they're now part of everyday work. Illness can still spread quickly through shared spaces, close contact, and routine tasks if basic controls are overlooked. Staying consistent with hygiene, awareness, and early action is what keeps small exposures from turning into widespread illness.

What's the Danger

Infectious disease risk is still present in everyday work, and it spreads quickly when basic controls are missed. Because it's not always visible, people often lower their guard, which increases exposure.

Person to Person Transmission

Close contact, shared air, and crowded spaces allow viruses and bacteria to spread through droplets and aerosols.

Contaminated Surfaces and Hands

Germs can survive on surfaces like tools, desks, and shared equipment. When hands are not cleaned properly, they transfer germs to the face, mouth, or other surfaces, increasing the chance of infection.

Working While Sick

When people come to work while ill, they expose others and increase the risk of outbreaks. This can lead to multiple workers becoming sick, staffing shortages, and operational disruption.

Reduced Awareness and Complacency

As time passes, people may stop following hygiene practices or assume the risk is low. This leads to missed precautions, delayed

response, and faster spread of illness in the workplace.

How to Protect Yourself

Protecting yourself from infectious disease at work is about staying consistent with simple habits.

Stay Consistent with Hygiene

Good hygiene is your first line of defense. It only works if you do it every time, not just when it feels necessary.

Be Aware of Close Contact

Pay attention to how you interact with others, especially in shared or crowded spaces.

Stay Alert, Don't Get Complacent

Just because the risk isn't obvious doesn't mean it's gone. Staying aware and consistent is what prevents illness from spreading.

Don't Ignore Symptoms

If you feel unwell, act early. Pushing through illness increases risk for everyone. Stay home when sick, report symptoms according to workplace procedures and follow return to work guidelines before coming back.

Keep Your Environment Clean and Ventilated

Airflow and cleanliness reduce the spread of illness.

Final Word

Infectious disease risk doesn't disappear; it just becomes easier to overlook. When you stay consistent with hygiene, pay attention to symptoms, and act early, you stop small exposures from turning into bigger problems. Simple habits done every day are what keep you and your team healthy.

Visit [ILT.SafetyNow.com](https://www.ilt.safetynow.com) or scan the QR code on the cover to access the full meeting kit, including the quiz and other supporting material.

Safety Talk

Aging Infrastructure: Recognizing and Managing Failures in Older Facilities

Older buildings and equipment are still doing the job, but every year that passes adds wear, corrosion, and stress that can turn a routine task into a serious incident. When aging infrastructure fails, the consequences hit hard – collapsed structures, electrical fires, burst pipes, and falling debris that put workers in the hospital.

What's the Danger

Aging infrastructure rarely fails without warning, but those warnings are easy to miss when they've been there for years.

Corroded Steel and Rebar - Rust expands as it forms, cracking concrete from the inside and weakening the steel underneath. By the time brown streaks appear on a column, the damage is already significant.

Hidden Plumbing and Roof Failures - Like galvanized lines that pinhole inside walls, roofs softened by years of snow loads, mold colonies fed by long-running leaks.

Outdated Electrical Systems - Old panels were never sized for modern equipment loads, and decades of heat cycling make wire insulation brittle. Many older facilities lack the arc-fault protection today's codes require. The result is a fire risk that builds quietly behind the walls.

Worn Mechanical Equipment - Bearings drift out of balance, motor mounts crack from years of vibration, and hydraulic seals weep oil long before they fail outright. Belts slip, guards no longer close fully, and fasteners back themselves loose. Each flaw is survivable alone but compounds into sudden failure.

How to Protect Yourself

A walk-around mindset and a willingness to report small concerns is what keeps an old facility safe.

Inspect With Fresh Eyes - Before each shift, look at your work area as if you have never seen it before. Scan for new cracks, rust streaks, water stains, sagging surfaces, and fasteners that look out of place. Listen for new rattles, squeals, or grinding sounds that did not exist last week.

Document and Report - Log every concern, no matter how small, and back it up with a photo and a date stamp. A written record turns a hunch into actionable data for maintenance and protects you if the issue worsens later.

Don't Bypass Worn Safety Devices - Replace failing interlocks instead of disabling them, report breakers that trip more than once and refuse to use taped-over guards.

Stay Out of Suspect Zones - If a floor flexes underfoot, a wall bulges, or a ceiling drips when it has not rained, treat the area as off-limits until it is checked. Isolate the space, post a sign, and notify supervision before anyone resumes work nearby.

If It Happens: Act Fast - Stop work and evacuate the immediate area, sound an alarm or alert nearby workers, don't re-enter until cleared by qualified personnel and document what you saw before details fade.

Final Word

Older facilities have stories and warnings. Listen for them, look for them, and speak up when something seems off. Aging infrastructure is only dangerous when no one is paying attention.

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Safety Talk

Silent Hazards: Noise, Vibration and Long-Term Health Risks

Some hazards don't bleed, burn, or break bones — they wear you down a little at a time. Year by year they chip away at your hearing, your circulation, your nerves, and your sleep. By the time you notice the damage from noise and vibration, it is usually permanent.

What's the Danger

Noise and vibration injuries develop slowly and quietly, which is exactly what makes them so dangerous.

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss - Sustained exposure above 85 decibels permanently damages the tiny hair cells in the inner ear. There is no pain, no obvious moment of injury, and no way to grow those cells back.

Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome - Power tools transfer vibration into the fingers, hands, and arms with every minute of use. Over time the small blood vessels constrict, and the nerves inflame. Numb or whitened fingertips after work are an early warning that should never be ignored.

Whole-Body Vibration

- Spinal compression from long hours on heavy equipment.
- Disc irritation from rough terrain and poor seats.
- Chronic back pain that ends careers early.

Tinnitus and Communication Risk - Persistent ringing in the ears does not stop when the shift ends — it follows the worker home and disrupts sleep, focus, and mood. When background noise drowns out alarms and shouted warnings, the silent hazard becomes a fast-acting one.

How to Protect Yourself

The damage is preventable, but only if you treat low-level exposure as seriously as a sudden injury.

Wear Hearing Protection Properly - Choose the right Noise Reduction Rating for the task and make sure plugs are inserted fully and rolled before fitting. Earmuffs need a tight seal around the entire ear cup with no hair or eyewear arms breaking the contact. Above 100 decibels, double up plugs and muffs together for adequate protection.

Take Vibration Breaks - Rotate tasks throughout the shift so that vibration exposure is broken up by recovery time. Set tool-time limits and stick to them, even when production pressure pushes you to keep going.

Choose Lower-Vibration Tools and Setups - Anti-vibration gloves and properly maintained grips, balanced equipment with sharp cutting edges and isolated, well-adjusted seats on heavy machinery.

Know Your Exposure Limits - Action levels for noise and vibration are set in regulation and apply to every workplace where these hazards exist.

Get Annual Hearing Tests - Audiograms catch early hearing loss before it becomes permanent and irreversible. Skipping the test does not make the damage go away — it just hides it from you.

Final Word

You can't grow back the hair cells in your ear or unwind a damaged disc in your spine. Silent hazards take what they take and never give it back. Protect what you've still got — every day, every shift, every tool.

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Safety Talk

Cyber-Physical Risks: When Data Attacks Meet Physical Safety

A cyberattack used to mean stolen passwords or a frozen email inbox, but those days are over. Today, attackers can reach into a factory and crash a robot, override a safety interlock, or shut down the building's heating and cooling. When the digital and physical worlds connect, every weak password becomes a potential injury — and every worker is on the front line.

What's the Danger

Phishing into the Plant

Most cyber-physical attacks start with one clicked link in an ordinary email. From the office network, attackers move laterally into operational systems. Malware that begins on a laptop can reach machine controllers within hours.

Tampered Sensors and Alarms

- Spoofed gas, temperature, or pressure readings.
- Suppressed alarms that should have stopped the line.
- False alerts that trigger unnecessary evacuations.

Unsecured Remote Access and Robots

Vendors and contractors often connect into plant systems through laptops, tablets, and VPNs left open. Forklifts, AGVs, and collaborative robots take their commands over the network and can be redirected at the worst moment. Workers nearby may have no warning before a vehicle changes course.

How to Protect Yourself

Cyber safety on the shop floor is everyone's

job.

Notice Equipment Acting Strangely

- Unexpected restarts or reboots without explanation.
- Set points or timers changing on their own.
- Alarms that don't match the real conditions.

Treat Every Login Like a Lock

Use strong, unique passwords on every system, and never share credentials with co-workers — even when it is faster. Enable multi-factor authentication anywhere it is offered, including on plant tablets and HMI panels.

Watch for Phishing on Plant Devices

HMI tablets, shared kiosks, and dispatch terminals are prime targets because they sit at the intersection of office and plant. If a message looks off — unexpected sender, urgent language, strange link — don't click it and don't dismiss it.

Lock Down Removable Media

USB sticks and personal devices are one of the most common attack paths into plant networks. Use only company-approved drives on plant systems, and never plug in something you found in the parking lot or got from a vendor without inspection.

Final Word

The line between a keyboard and a kill switch is thinner than ever. When data attacks reach the physical world, the people who keep operations safe are the same ones who notice when something's off. Stay alert online, stay alert on the floor — they're the same shift now.

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Fatality Files

Triton/Trisis Safety System Attack

At a petrochemical facility, attackers infiltrated the plant's industrial control system and safety instrumented system (SIS)—the very system designed to prevent explosions and protect workers. The malware (known as Triton/Trisis) attempted to disable these safety controls, which would have allowed unsafe operating conditions to continue without automatic shutdown.

During the incident, abnormal behavior in the system triggered an unexpected shutdown. Investigations later confirmed that the attackers were actively trying to override critical safety protections.

If the attack had succeeded fully, it could have led to a catastrophic explosion, placing workers at immediate risk of serious injury or death.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com>

COVID-19 Deaths Among Healthcare Workers

A healthcare worker was assigned to care for patients during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, infection control procedures were still evolving, and access to appropriate personal protective equipment was inconsistent.

The worker had repeated close contact with patients who were later confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, often in enclosed indoor environments with prolonged exposure.

After several days, the worker began experiencing symptoms and was later diagnosed with COVID-19. The illness progressed rapidly, leading to severe respiratory complications that required

hospitalization.

Despite medical treatment, the worker's condition worsened, and the infection resulted in death.

Investigations identified workplace exposure, high viral load, and insufficient protective measures as key contributing factors.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov>

Worker Killed After Workplace Altercation Escalates

A worker had been dealing with ongoing tension and negative interactions with a coworker, creating a stressful and hostile work environment. The situation had not been addressed, and communication between team members had broken down. Over time, frustration escalated, and during a work shift, a confrontation occurred on the job site. What began as a verbal conflict quickly intensified, with both individuals distracted from their surroundings and the task at hand.

During the altercation, the situation turned physical, and the worker was seriously injured. The incident unfolded in an active work area where hazards were already present, increasing the severity of the outcome.

Investigators later identified that the unresolved conflict, lack of intervention, and breakdown in workplace culture contributed to the event. The case highlights how unchecked bullying or hostility can escalate beyond words, creating conditions where serious injuries or even fatalities can occur.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com>

Training

How to Use Badges Without Making Safety Training Feel Childish

The word “badge” can make some safety managers wince. It sounds like something from a school classroom, a video game, or a corporate engagement program that gets mocked on the shop floor. In industrial, construction, transportation, warehousing, manufacturing, utilities, public works, and field service environments, employees can spot forced enthusiasm immediately. If recognition feels artificial, they’ll reject it before the training has a chance to work. That doesn’t mean badges are useless. It means they have to mean something.

A badge in safety training should not be a digital sticker for clicking through a module or a cartoon trophy for completing mandatory content. If workers earn badges for every small action, the badge quickly becomes noise. If it has a childish name, workers may roll their eyes. If it represents nothing more than attendance, supervisors won’t trust it and workers won’t value it.

When designed properly, badges can show progress, mark readiness, support refresher cycles, recognize role-based development, and help supervisors see where workers are in a training pathway. The difference comes down to credibility. Adult workers don’t need to be entertained into caring about safety. They need training that respects their experience, connects to the work, and gives them practical confidence.

A Badge Should Represent Something Real

A badge should represent completion of

required orientation, review of a specific procedure, participation in a seasonal hazard campaign, supervisor safety training, or verification of a task-related competency.

The stronger the badge, the more clearly it answers a workplace question:

- Has this new employee completed the required safety orientation?
- Has this worker reviewed the updated lockout procedure?
- Has this supervisor completed incident investigation training?
- Has this crew finished heat stress readiness?
- Has this employee completed the refresher required before returning to forklift operation?
- Has this worker demonstrated the task under supervision?

If the badge answers one of those questions, it has practical value. If it simply says, “*Great job completing another course*,” it doesn’t.

Badges should also be honest about what they represent. A badge labelled “Lockout Competent” may be misleading if the worker only watched a video and passed a quiz. Better examples include “Lockout Awareness Complete,” “Machine-Specific Procedure Reviewed,” and “Lockout Demonstration Verified.” Those badges clearly distinguish awareness from verified competence.

For high-risk work, a badge should never imply a worker is qualified unless the organization has actually verified competence.

Use Language that Fits the Workplace

Badge names should be plain, specific, and connected to the work. Workers are more likely to respect recognition when it feels like part of the job rather than an attempt to make the job feel like a game.

Avoid Over-badging

If everything earns a badge, nothing does. Badges should mark meaningful milestones, not every click. Build badges around learning pathways instead of individual lessons. A new employee might earn one badge after completing orientation rather than separate badges for every topic. A worker returning to a high-risk task might earn a refresher badge after completing training and supervisor follow-up. Badges should organize learning, not decorate it.

Connect Badges to Roles

Different workers need different proof. New workers need orientation and hazard awareness. Supervisors need incident response, coaching, inspections, and corrective action training. Maintenance employees need lockout, machine guarding, and equipment-specific procedures. Drivers need defensive driving, fatigue management, inspections, and incident reporting.

Role-based badges make the training system easier to understand and help managers see whether workers are prepared for their responsibilities.

Reinforce Learning

A badge by itself does very little. Its value increases when supervisors reinforce learning through observation, coaching, and discussion. A “Forklift Refresher Complete” badge should lead to a workplace observation. A “Heat

Stress Readiness” badge should prompt a crew discussion before hot weather arrives.

Where refresher training is required, badges should reflect that. Procedures, equipment, hazards, legislation, and seasonal risks change. A badge should also be supported by solid training records showing what was completed, when, which version was assigned, and whether supervisor verification occurred. A badge is only as strong as the record behind it.

Think of Badges as Readiness Markers

Workers know safety training exists because people get hurt. Recognition should match that reality. Think of badges as internal readiness markers, not prizes. They signal that a training expectation has been met, support compliance, help supervisors track readiness, and create useful records. Any pride they create should come from demonstrated capability—not novelty.

The strongest badge systems answer practical questions, reinforce supervisor accountability, support compliance, and make training pathways easier to follow. The weakest systems hand out too many badges, use gimmicky names, reward shallow completion, and imply competence that hasn’t been verified.

Workers don’t reject badges because they dislike recognition. They reject recognition that feels fake. Give them a badge that reflects something real, and the reaction changes. Workers understand it, supervisors use it, and safety managers appreciate the structure it brings to training records and refresher planning.

Badges should not make safety training feel childish. They should make safety training feel organized, visible, credible, and connected to the work.