

# SafeSupervisor

## Newsletter

Your front-line manager safety resource since 1929

SEPTEMBER 2026



### This Month's Highlights

This month, discover why training completion doesn't always equal competence, what a tragic death teaches us about heat stress prevention, and how AI-powered video translation is helping make safety training more accessible for today's diverse workforce. Read more highlights inside, and visit [ilt.safetynow.com](http://ilt.safetynow.com) to view the full articles.



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# Completion Is Not Competence

## Five Training Metrics That Reveal Whether Workers Can Perform Safely

Imagine a lockout refresher course showing 100% completion. Later that day, a supervisor observes a worker preparing to service equipment without identifying all energy sources or verifying stored pressure has been released. The training was completed, but competency had not been demonstrated. This gap between completion and capability is where many organizations struggle.

Completion data still serves an important purpose. It confirms that workers were assigned training, participated, and generated records for compliance. However, it cannot demonstrate whether knowledge has been retained, transferred to the workplace, or applied safely when conditions become complex.

Research supports this distinction. Reviews by NIOSH and the Institute for Work & Health have found that while training can improve safety behaviours, training alone is not enough to reduce injuries without reinforcement through supervision, hazard controls, work design, and ongoing evaluation.

Rather than treating completion as the final measure of success, organizations should evaluate five additional metrics that provide

stronger evidence of competency.

### 1. Decision Quality in Realistic Scenarios

Traditional quizzes often test memory rather than judgment. Workers may recognize the correct answer without being able to apply it under production pressure or changing conditions.

Scenario-based assessments provide richer information by evaluating how workers identify hazards, select controls, and respond when unexpected situations arise. Measuring first-attempt accuracy, critical errors, and decision-making reveals far more than an overall quiz score.

The goal is not simply to know the correct procedure but to recognize when work should stop, additional information is needed, or hazards have changed.

### 2. The Confidence-Performance Gap

Asking workers how confident they are after completing a scenario creates another valuable data point when compared with actual performance.

Four patterns typically emerge:

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- Low confidence and low performance indicates additional support is needed.
- High performance with low confidence suggests workers need more practice.
- High confidence and high performance reflects genuine competence.
- High confidence with poor performance represents the greatest risk because workers may not recognize their own limitations.

Confidence data should be used for coaching rather than discipline. When many workers confidently make the same mistake, the problem often lies in unclear procedures or ineffective training rather than individual performance.

### 3. Knowledge Retention Over Time

Passing immediately after training only shows short-term recall. Real workplace decisions often occur weeks or months later.

Retention checks conducted 30, 60, or 90 days after training provide a much clearer picture of what workers actually remember. Rather than repeating identical quiz questions, follow-up assessments should present new scenarios that test the same decision-making skills.

Patterns of declining performance can identify where refresher training, job aids, toolbox talks, or supervisor coaching are needed before unsafe habits develop.

### 4. Field Verification

Some competencies simply cannot be verified online. High-risk activities such as lockout/tagout, confined space entry, fall protection, or equipment operation require direct observation.

Supervisors should use structured observation checklists that focus on the small number of behaviours that truly control risk. Instead

of asking whether someone “worked safely,” observations should confirm critical steps such as identifying hazards, isolating energy sources, following procedures, and verifying conditions before work begins.

These observations also create opportunities for immediate coaching while providing evidence that competency has been demonstrated under real operating conditions.

### 5. Operational Leading Indicators

The final measure of training effectiveness is whether safe behaviours appear consistently in day-to-day work. Useful leading indicators include supervisor interventions, procedural deviations, inspection findings, equipment damage, near misses, corrective actions, stop-work decisions, and recurring quality issues.

No single indicator proves training caused improvement. Many operational factors influence outcomes. Instead, these measures should be used alongside learning data to identify where additional investigation or reinforcement is needed.

For example, if scenario performance is high but field observations continue to identify procedural errors, the problem may involve workload, supervision, unclear procedures, or workplace culture rather than the training itself.

### Looking Beyond Completion

The most important question is not, “Did everyone finish the course?” It is, “What evidence shows workers can recognize hazards and perform safely when conditions become difficult?” Competence is not earned by reaching the end of a course. It is demonstrated through decisions, reinforced through practice, and verified where the work is actually performed.

# Fatality File

## Tragic Death of Anthony Dalton Underscores Need for Heat Stress

Working in high heat and humidity is more than uncomfortable. It can also be deadly. Heat stress is especially lethal when it sneaks up on victims. That should never happen. Heat stress doesn't strike without warning. But when you don't make supervisors and workers aware of the warning signs, you leave them vulnerable. Worse, you empower them to do things that actually increase the danger. Here's a real-life story of how lack of education led directly to a heat stress death.



### Chronicle of a Preventable Heat Stress Death

Anthony Dalton and Ronald Morrissey are trained boilermakers and best friends who've decided to leave their native Newfoundland to take a job in a New Brunswick paper mill.

*May 20*

Dalton and Morrissey report for their first day of work. The temperatures outside are high for May—34.4° C/94° F, and 35% humidity. It's even hotter in the mill where chemicals are heated in enclosed spaces. Dalton and Morrissey work inside all day on scaffolds. Dalton feels fatigue. It's the first warning sign. But they don't recognize it because nobody gave them any information about heat stress hazards. The contractor will later testify later that he just assumed trained boilermakers would know all about heat stress. It turns out to be a tragically flawed assumption.

*May 21*

The outdoor temperature has climbed to 37.2° C/99° F. Humidity is at 33%. Dalton

and Morrissey work the entire day. Dalton is getting worse. When the two get back to their motel after work, Dalton experiences muscle cramps. Exhausted, he passes out on the bathroom floor. He drinks a beer, not recognizing that alcohol will dehydrate him when he desperately needs to rehydrate.

*May 22*

It's even hotter at 38.3° C/101° F. Dalton manages to drag himself to work. He spends the morning inside a tank building a scaffold. After afternoon break, he tells the supervisor that he's too exhausted to continue. He sits on the floor with his back against the base of a column. When the shift ends, he can barely stand up. He's incoherent. He stumbles about 100 yards and collapses. Even now, nobody knows what's wrong. He's rushed to the hospital in an ambulance.

*May 23*

Anthony Dalton dies of heat stroke in his hospital bed.

## Takeaway: Implement a Heat Stress Training Program for Your Workers

Perhaps the saddest part of the death of Anthony Dalton is that it could have been prevented. There was ample warning: Dalton's fatigue, the cramps, his passing out on the bathroom floor, etc. Anybody attuned to the signs of heat stress would have recognized what was going on and acted while there was still time. Tragically, because none of the mill's workers or supervisors had any education on heat stress, they missed every opportunity to save him.

Don't let what happened to Anthony Dalton happen to your own workers. Implement a heat stress training program to educate workers and supervisors about:

- The different kinds of heat illnesses, including heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.
- How to spot the symptoms, risk factors, danger signs, and symptoms of each type of heat illness.
- How to respond to those signs and symptoms;
- The first-aid procedures for heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Workers' own responsibilities to protect themselves and their coworkers against heat stress.
- Safe work procedures for working in extreme heat and humidity.
- The dangers of using drugs, including therapeutic ones, and alcohol in hot work environments.
- The use of protective clothing and PPE for heat stress; and
- The purpose of acclimatization, environmental and medical surveillance programs and why workers should participate in them.



Don't Miss  
Our Upcoming  
Webinar

## **Violence, Harassment, and Respect Training That's More Than a Checkbox**

**Save Your Seat**

**Wednesday,  
October 14, 2026  
at 9:00 a.m. Pacific**

# Safety Talk

## Working Alone: Isolation, Emergency Response and Check-In Systems Meeting Kit

Working alone means that if something goes wrong, nobody is there to call for help, apply first aid, or even notice that you're in trouble. Most injuries are survivable — but only if help arrives in time.

### What's the Danger

Lone workers face all the same hazards as anyone else plus one more: no one is watching their back. Incidents that would be minor with a coworker nearby can turn life-threatening when you're working alone.

Medical emergencies with no witness, a heart attack, allergic reaction, or diabetic episode that happens in front of coworkers gets treated in minutes. The same event alone in a remote area or locked room can be fatal before help arrives.

Working alone near chemicals, electrical systems, or in confined spaces multiplies the risk. If exposure or a shock occurs, you need immediate help and if you're alone, that help must come from a system you set up before you started.

Getting trapped or lost In large facilities, remote sites, or unfamiliar buildings, a worker can become trapped, disoriented, or inaccessible. Without a check-in system, hours can pass before anyone realizes something is wrong.

### How to Protect Yourself

When you work alone, your safety system is whatever you set up before you start.

**Use the Check-In System — Every Time** If your workplace has a lone worker check-in

system — whether it's a phone call, an app, or a manual sign-in use it every single time without exception. These systems only work when they're used consistently. If you miss a check-in, the right response from your monitor is to treat it as an emergency.

### Tell Someone Where You're Going

Before starting alone work, let a supervisor or coworker know your location, what you're doing, and how long you expect to be. Give them a time when they should expect to hear from you. If plans change — you move to a different area or the job takes longer — update them immediately

**Carry Communication at All Times** - Your phone, radio, or emergency device should be on your person — not left on a bench, in a bag, or in the truck. If you get hurt and can't move, that device needs to be within arm's reach. Confirm it has signal or charge before you start. In areas with no cell coverage, make sure you have a two-way radio or satellite device instead.

**Match the Risk to the Controls** - Not all alone work carries the same level of risk. Filing paperwork in an empty office is very different from working alone near energized equipment or chemicals. Know what hazards your specific task involves and make sure your check-in frequency and communication tools match that level of risk.

### Final Word

Nobody plans to be the person who needed help and couldn't get it. Set up your check-in system before you start, keep your communication device close, and never assume the job is too short or simple for something to go wrong.

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# Safety Talk

## Visual Fatigue: Lighting, Glare, and Workers

Your eyes work hard every shift. When the lighting is bad, too dim, too bright, or full of glare — your eyes strain to compensate, and over time that affects how well you see, how fast you react, and how many mistakes you make. Poor lighting doesn't just hurt your eyes. It hurts your safety.

### What's the Danger

Most workers don't connect a near-miss or an error to the lighting in their area. But poor lighting is a hidden factor in more incidents than people realize.

**Dim or Insufficient Light** - When there isn't enough light to see clearly, workers misjudge distances, miss details, and fail to spot hazards like spills, uneven surfaces, or moving equipment.

**Glare and Harsh Lighting** - Eye Strain and Visual Fatigue Squinting, focusing, and adjusting to poor light all day is exhausting work for your eyes. Visual fatigue shows up as headaches, dry or burning eyes, blurred vision, and difficulty concentrating all of which slow you down and increase the chance of an error or incident.

**Screen and Detail Work** - Workers doing close-up tasks reading gauges, inspecting parts, using computers or tablets are especially vulnerable to visual fatigue when lighting conditions aren't matched to the work.

### How to Protect Yourself

Better lighting makes you sharper, safer, and less tired at the end of the shift.

**Report Poor Lighting in Your Work Area** - If your work area is too dim, has burned-out

bulbs, flickering lights, or glare problems, report it — don't just adapt to it. Workers get so used to bad conditions that they stop noticing them, but their performance suffers the whole time. If you've mentioned it before and nothing changed, mention it again.

**Position Yourself to Reduce Glare** - Angle your screen or work surface so light sources aren't directly in front of you or reflecting off it. Use blinds or coverings to manage window glare if your area has them. If you work at a computer, position the screen so windows are to the side — not behind or in front of you.

**Give Your Eyes Regular Breaks** - For close-up or screen-based work, follow the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. It sounds simple, but it genuinely reduces eye strain over the course of a shift.

**Know the Signs of Visual Fatigue** - Headaches, burning or watery eyes, blurred vision, increased sensitivity to light, and difficulty focusing are all signs your eyes are working too hard. If you notice these symptoms during your shift, don't push through. Step away from the task, rest your eyes, and let your supervisor know. If these symptoms happen regularly at work, they need to be investigated — they're your body telling you something in your environment needs to change.

### Final Word

Your eyes are one of your most important safety tools on the job. Take care of them. Report bad lighting, give yourself breaks, and don't ignore the signs that your eyes are struggling.

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# Safety Talk

## Electrical Safety: Shock, Arc Flash, and Lock-out/Tag-out

Electricity kills quietly and instantly. You don't get a warning before a shock, and you don't get a second chance after an arc flash. Electrical incidents are among the most preventable in any workplace — which makes every one that happens completely unacceptable.

### What's the Danger

Electrical hazards are everywhere in most workplaces, and the danger isn't always obvious. Wires look harmless. Panels look closed. Equipment looks off. Looking isn't enough.

**Arc Flash** - An arc flash is an explosive release of energy caused by an electrical fault. The flash, heat, and pressure wave can cause severe burns, blindness, hearing loss, and blast injuries even from several feet away. Arc flash doesn't require you to touch anything. Proximity is enough.

**Electric Shock** - Shock occurs when current passes through your body even a small amount can stop your heart. Wet hands, damaged cords, and working near exposed wires all increase shock risk dramatically. Current that enters one hand and exits the other passes directly through the chest and heart.

**Working on Energized Equipment** - Assuming equipment is off because it looks off has killed people. Without proper lockout/tagout, equipment can be energized remotely, restart automatically, or store energy in capacitors long after it appears to be shut down.

**Unauthorized Electrical Work** - Non-electricians attempting repairs, bypassing

safety devices, or removing panel covers to 'take a quick look' are exposed to hazards they may not recognize until it's too late.

### How to Protect Yourself

When it comes to electricity, the rules aren't suggestions, they're the line between a close call and a fatality.

#### Follow Lockout/Tagout — Every Single Time –

It involves isolating the energy source, locking it out with a personal lock, and verifying the equipment is dead before touching it. Every step matters. Skipping any part of LOTO because the job is quick or the equipment 'looks' off is one of the most dangerous decisions you can make on any worksite.

#### Inspect Cords and Equipment Before Use

- Before plugging in any tool or piece of equipment, take a quick look at the cord, plug, and casing. Look for fraying, cracks, burn marks, or exposed wire. A damaged cord on a power tool is a shock risk every time someone picks it up. Tag it out, report it, and get a replacement.

**Report Electrical Hazards Immediately** - If you notice a buzzing outlet, a warm panel, a burning smell, flickering lights, or any equipment that gives you a tingle when you touch it — stop using it and report it right away. These are all warning signs of an electrical fault. They don't fix themselves, and they don't stay minor. Report it to your supervisor and make sure the area is kept clear until it's assessed by someone qualified.

### Final Word

Electricity follows rules — and so should you. Follow LOTO every time, stay out of what you're not trained for, and report anything that looks or sounds wrong.

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# Safety Talk

## Hand Tools: Power vs Manual – Safe Use, PPE, and Maintenance

Hand tools are the most used equipment in almost any workplace and one of the most overlooked sources of injury. A slip of a blade, a kickback from a grinder, or a hammer strike gone wrong can take a finger, damage an eye, or break a bone in a fraction of a second.

### What's the Danger

Because hand tools are familiar and every day, workers often stop giving them the respect they deserve.

#### Using the Wrong Tool for the Job

Using a screwdriver as a chisel, a wrench as a hammer, or a knife as a pry tool puts force through a tool in a direction it wasn't designed for.

#### Dull or Damaged Tools

- A dull blade requires more force, which means less control.
- Cracked handles, missing guards, and bent teeth all change how a tool behaves under load.
- Damaged power tool cords or loose chucks are shock and kickback risks waiting to happen.

#### No PPE or Wrong PPE

Eyes are the most injured body part from hand tool use — and most of those injuries were completely preventable with the right eye protection.

#### Poor Storage and Housekeeping

Tools left on elevated surfaces fall on people. Blades left exposed in a toolbox cut hands reaching in blind. Cords left across walkways become trip hazards. Bad housekeeping turns

tools into hazards before anyone even picks them up.

### How to Protect Yourself

Safe tool use is about habit — the same checks, every time, no shortcuts.

#### Inspect Every Tool Before You Use It

Take ten seconds before you pick up any tool to look it over. Check for cracks in the handle, damage to the blade or tip, missing guards on power tools, and frayed cords. A tool that looks fine from a distance may not be.

#### Use the Right Tool for the Job

- Match the tool to the task if the right tool isn't available, get it, don't improvise.
- Never use a tool to do something it wasn't designed for, even 'just this once'.
- If you're not sure which tool to use, ask — it takes thirty seconds and saves a trip to first aid.

#### Wear Your PPE for the Task

Eye protection is non-negotiable for cutting, grinding, chiseling, and any striking task. Gloves protect against cuts and abrasions but should never be worn around rotating power tools, gloves can get caught and pull your hand into the tool. Know which PPE applies to which task, and wear it before you start, not after something flies toward your face

### Final Word

Respect the tool in your hand. The most routine job can go sideways in less than a second when a tool fails or slips. Inspect it, use it right, protect yourself, and put it away properly. Every time.

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# Beyond Subtitles

## How AI Video Translation Is Making Safety Training More Inclusive

As workforces become more multilingual, organizations need safety training that every worker can understand. AI-powered video translation makes it possible to translate, dub, subtitle, and synchronize training videos into multiple languages far faster and at a lower cost than traditional localization. However, speed alone is not enough. Effective multilingual safety training depends on preserving hazard meaning, ensuring technical accuracy, and verifying worker understanding.



Language access is a safety requirement, not simply an inclusion initiative. Workers who cannot understand training are less able to recognize hazards, ask questions, report concerns, or apply safe work practices. OSHA requires training to be presented in a language and vocabulary workers understand, while the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety recommends multilingual resources to reduce communication barriers for newcomer and international workers.

AI translation allows organizations to update orientation videos, toolbox talks, refresher courses, and safety announcements much more quickly. Rather than spending weeks producing separate versions for each language, safety teams can generate draft translations in hours. Human reviewers can then focus on the areas that matter most: confirming technical accuracy, natural language, and workplace terminology.

That human review is essential because AI can produce translations that sound fluent while changing the meaning of critical safety

instructions. Words such as “must,” “verify,” or “authorize” carry specific operational importance, and replacing them with simpler language can weaken or even alter required actions. Technical terminology, PPE names, equipment identifiers, emergency procedures, and measurements all require careful validation.

Translation is only one part of localization. Effective localization also adapts examples, workplace vocabulary, visuals, captions, and on-screen text so workers receive the same operational meaning regardless of language. A dubbed narrator is of little value if warning labels, diagrams, or forms remain untranslated.

Organizations should adopt a structured quality process that includes four levels of validation:

- **Translated access:** Workers can receive narration, captions, and visuals in their preferred language.
- **Linguistic validation:** Qualified language reviewers confirm the translation is natural

- and appropriate for the intended audience.
- **Operational validation:** Safety experts verify that hazards, controls, procedures, and required actions remain technically accurate.
- **Performance verification:** Workers demonstrate they can correctly apply the training through discussions, scenarios, observations, or practical demonstrations.

Several risks deserve particular attention. Regional dialect differences, overly simplified technical terms, untranslated visual elements, and AI's tendency to produce confidently worded mistakes can all reduce training effectiveness. Organizations must also address privacy concerns, voice-cloning permissions, and the protection of confidential training materials before adopting AI translation tools.

A controlled workflow helps maintain consistency. First, approve the source content and develop a standardized glossary of technical terms. Next, generate AI translations, then conduct both linguistic and technical reviews. Test the translated content with representative workers by asking them to explain hazards and demonstrate appropriate responses rather than simply asking whether the translation "sounds good." Finally, publish approved versions through the organization's learning management system and update every language whenever the source material changes.

Training should also be designed with translation in mind. Plain language, shorter sentences, consistent terminology, visible demonstrations, synchronized captions, and modular content all improve translation quality while making future updates easier. Clear source material produces better results in every language.

AI translation offers benefits beyond reducing

production costs. It allows organizations to keep every language version current, rapidly communicate procedural changes, and provide consistent training to a more diverse workforce. Combined with centralized learning management, assignments, assessments, reporting, and version control, multilingual training becomes both scalable and defensible.

SafetyNow helps organizations deliver multilingual safety and compliance training through a centralized platform featuring thousands of courses, mobile access, knowledge checks, reporting, and customizable content. By combining AI-assisted translation with structured human review and controlled delivery, organizations can expand language access without compromising safety, compliance, or training quality.

Ultimately, AI should be judged not by how convincingly it translates a presenter, but by whether every worker receives the same understanding of hazards, controls, and safe work practices. The goal is not simply translating more videos—it is ensuring every worker has equal access to the knowledge they need to work safely.



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# Fatality Files

## Worker Killed in Arc Flash and Blast at Eversource Energy Substation

On July 12, 2022, 31-year-old Eversource Energy employee Fabio Pires was killed by an arc flash and blast while performing maintenance on energized electrical equipment in Boston. OSHA's investigation found that the equipment had not been fully de-energized, manufacturer maintenance procedures were not followed, and the company failed to adequately assess the potential incident energy and required protective equipment. OSHA proposed \$333,560 in penalties.

The incident highlights the importance of de-energizing and locking out equipment, verifying zero energy before work begins, conducting arc flash hazard assessments, wearing appropriate arc-rated PPE, and following manufacturer procedures during maintenance and reassembly.

## Young Worker Caught in Vertical Edger Saw Blades at Missouri Sawmill

On January 11, 2023, a young worker at a Missouri sawmill was fatally injured after becoming caught in the exposed rotating blades of a vertical edger saw. OSHA investigated the incident and identified serious amputation and entanglement hazards caused by inadequate machine guarding. The employer was issued a hazard letter requiring corrective action, but during a follow-up inspection on March 1, inspectors found that the dangerous condition had not been corrected and the exposed saw remained in operation, resulting in additional citations and enforcement action.

The incident demonstrates the severe risks

associated with missing or bypassed machine guards, inadequate equipment inspections, and failure to correct known hazards. Employers should ensure machinery is properly guarded, inspect equipment before each shift, and immediately tag out unsafe or defective equipment. Workers should never remove or bypass guards and should use the correct tools, blades, and appropriate PPE for each task.

## Visual Fatigue: Lighting, Glare, and Worker Performance

In 2023, 176 pedestrians, most of them roadway workers, were struck and killed in U.S. work zones. Vehicle strikes have become an increasing cause of highway worker fatalities, with low-light conditions, glare, visual fatigue, and inadequate separation from moving traffic contributing to incidents. NIOSH and OSHA investigations have identified recurring hazards such as insufficient task lighting during dawn, dusk, and night work, sun and headlight glare that reduces visibility, long shifts that slow reaction time, and poor traffic controls.

These incidents demonstrate how reduced visibility and fatigue can prevent both workers and equipment operators from recognizing hazards in time. Employers should maintain adequate lighting, control glare, provide positive separation between pedestrians and vehicles, and manage fatigue through appropriate breaks and task rotation. Workers should report lighting problems, wear suitable high-visibility PPE and safety eyewear, remain alert around moving equipment, and treat dawn, dusk, and nighttime operations as elevated-risk conditions requiring additional precautions.