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How Much Training is Enough Training?

Zig Ziglar, a well known author and motivational speaker is known for saying, “There’s only one thing worse than training your staff and having them leave, that’s not training them and having them stay.” But how much training is enough training?

If you work in a high-risk industry that is closely monitored by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, safety training is always a matter of concern.

There were 4,679 fatal job injuries in the U.S. in 2014—the most recent year for which data is available. This number is two percent higher than the figure for the previous year. Although the rate of injuries among full-time equivalent workers had been on the decline from 2006 to 2013, it merely held steady from 2013 to 2014.

Transportation incidents accounted for 40 percent of all fatal occupational injuries. Next were slips, trips, and falls (17 percent), followed by contact with objects and equipment (usually due to being struck by an object or equipment, 16 percent).

Experience would suggest that most employees who died on the job had received training to prevent their very cause of death—especially true when it comes to fall protection and safety around large equipment and suspended objects.

So, rather than asking how much training is enough, perhaps we need to ask:

- Does the training improve worker behavior?
- Does the training reduce incidents and injuries?

Similar questions apply to training designed to eliminate errors and rework. Regardless of how the training is delivered, follow-up by supervisors is vital to its success.

They must model the desired behavior and motivate employees to comply. After all, adults learn only when they want or feel compelled to do so. Adults learn best in informal environments and through continuous feedback and encouragement. This may be especially true of the Millennial Generation. So, the question is: are your supervisors up to the task?

About the Author

Gretchen LeFever Watson, PhD, is a clinical psychologist whose research and prevention programs have won international scholarly and media attention including appearance on national TV and radio programs such as *CNN Headline News*, the *PBS News Hour*, and *The Diane Rehm Show*. In addition to positions as a hospital psychologist, medical school faculty member, and university professor, Dr. Watson served as Director of patient Safety and Performance Excellence for a large healthcare system. She is President of Safety & Leadership Solutions, a consulting firm for organizational safety and change management, www.yoursls.com.



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