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## **Hierarchy of Controls**

Job sites are dangerous places and can have numerous hazards at any given moment. As employees, it is important to know how to protect yourself from these hazards by using controls.

There are typically multiple safeguards available at your disposal to control a single hazard, ranging in effectiveness.

To help evaluate these safeguards, in this toolbox talk we will discuss a safety mechanism known as “the hierarchy of controls” and provide an example of using it on the construction site to evaluate and mitigate risk.

### What is the hierarchy of controls?

The hierarchy of controls is a system used in the construction industry to minimize or eliminate exposure to hazards.

The hierarchy of controls has five levels of actions to reduce or remove these hazards, sorted from most to least effective:

- Elimination
- Substitution
- Engineering Controls
- Administrative Controls
- Personal Protective Equipment

It is important that all employees understand each of the five levels of the hierarchy of controls and how they work. Here is more detail on each level:

- Elimination

The best solution in any hazardous situation would be to physically remove the hazard.

“Elimination” is the preferred solution to protect workers because without the hazard present, no exposure or injury can occur.

- Substitution

The next best solution would be to use substitution, or replace the hazardous object, material, or process with something less hazardous.

Before working in a hazardous situation, evaluate if there is an option that is not as hazardous.

This could involve actions such as using a safer tool to get the job done or swapping out a toxic substance for an environmentally safe material.

- Engineering Controls

Engineering controls aim to isolate workers from the hazard. When performing a hazardous task, evaluate if there are any engineering controls that you can implement to keep the employee safer.

This includes things such as physical barriers, equipment guards, and ventilation systems.

- Administrative Controls

Administrative controls are put in place to change the way people work. These include things such as job training, job rotation, breaks, company policies, etc.

Administrative controls limit exposure to hazards by adjusting work tasks or schedules. For example, not all employees may need to be on a jobsite when a hazardous task is being performed, limiting the number of employees at risk.

- PPE

Personal protective equipment, or PPE, is used to protect the worker from the hazard.

The task you are performing will determine how much or how little PPE you should wear to protect yourself.

Some examples of PPE are:

- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Steel Toe Shoes
- ✓ Respirator
- ✓ Coveralls
- ✓ Earplugs
- ✓ Hard Hats
- ✓ Safety Glasses