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New Equipment Safety

Every single day, new technologies and equipment are being introduced into the marketplace. These technologies and equipment eventually make it to our workplaces. It is important to thoroughly understand these new tools before beginning work. Often new tasks and equipment are a source of injury on the job.

Before Using New Equipment:

Depending on how complex the task or piece of equipment that you are going to use will dictate what will need to be addressed before it is put into service. Here we will only discuss a few basic guidelines for what needs to happen before a new piece of equipment or process is put into place.

1. Involve a subject matter expert (SME). This person can be a rep from the supplier, someone who is familiar with the process within your company, or a consultant. Regardless of who it is, involving someone with expertise on the new equipment before the decision is made to purchase or use it is crucial. Involving the SME before the equipment is purchased better ensures that all aspects of bringing in the new equipment have been thought of and if it will actually fit the needs of what is being brought into the workplace for.
2. Review all the relevant paperwork for the piece of equipment. Documentation such as the operator's manual, safety guidelines, and technical sheet should be reviewed by everyone involved in the process. From this material and guidance from the subject matter expert, a company-specific job hazard analysis, job safety analysis, and/or standard operating procedures should be created.
3. Ensure that all of the other necessary resources are in place to operate the equipment safely. Some other resources that could be needed are additional training, other tools, other emergency equipment, maintenance equipment, additional personnel, more time to complete the task, shutdown schedules, etc. The list goes on and on, depending on how complex the new equipment is. The subject matter expert, along with the other personnel involved in this process, should be able to foresee these other needs and communicate them to the management during the onboarding process.

Other Considerations:

The above steps may seem excessive for many new tools or tasks, however, even new versions of equipment used onsite could benefit from the guidelines above. For example, it may not seem important to bring in new 2017 models of the CAT excavators you are already using onsite. However, if the model the company is using onsite now is from 2009, there can be a major number of differences.

Items like operational controls, safety controls, maintenance schedules, training requirements, new features, etc., can be vastly different than the model from eight years prior. Use the guidelines above to review the equipment before bringing it onsite and having your operators put the equipment to use. This could save a life from a safety standpoint and time and efficiency from an operations standpoint.

Summary:

There are almost always secondary considerations that are not thought of when bringing in new equipment.

Creating a thorough process for bringing in new equipment is a proactive approach that benefits everyone involved in many ways.

The proper process will not only help to ensure injuries are prevented but can also help to avoid costly mistakes from an operational standpoint.