

Recognizing hazards is one of the most important skills for staying safe at work.

- Hazards are anything that can cause harm.
- When you know how to spot hazards, you can take the necessary steps to avoid injuries and incidents.

Many workplace incidents happen because a hazard went unnoticed or was ignored.

- Taking the time to look around, think critically, and speak up can prevent serious injuries or worse.

Start every task by asking:

- What could go wrong here?
- Is there anything that might cause someone to slip, trip, get hit, or make a mistake?
- Has anything changed since the last time I did this job?



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Hazard recognition means identifying potential dangers on the job, before an incident happens.

- This includes watching for physical risks but also being aware of less obvious problems like poor lighting, unsafe behaviors, or equipment that's starting to wear out.



Hazards come in many forms. Some are obvious, others are hidden or appear over time. Some common categories of hazards to be aware of:

Physical – things that can cause slips, trips, falls, cuts, burns, or electric shock



Ergonomic – caused by repetitive motion, awkward posture, or heavy lifting



Chemical – harmful substances like cleaning solutions, fumes, or flammable materials

Biological – bacteria, viruses, mold, and other infectious agents



Noise – loud environments that can damage hearing or make it hard to communicate

Environmental – extreme heat, cold, mud, poor lighting, or inadequate ventilation

Behavioral – unsafe actions, such as rushing, ignoring procedures, or taking shortcuts

Hazards can also be dynamic, meaning they change based on the environment, weather, time of day, or the specific task being performed. Staying alert throughout your shift is key to noticing these changes.

Not all hazards come from equipment or the environment. Many hazards come from the choices people make, like:

- Disabling safety guards on equipment
- Ignoring PPE requirements
- Using tools improperly
- Rushing through a task or skipping steps
- Working under the influence of drugs or alcohol



Situational awareness means staying alert to what's happening around you and thinking ahead.

➤ It's the ability to see the whole picture, including changes in the environment, your coworkers' actions, and anything unusual that might indicate a risk.

Throughout your workday, be especially aware of:

- New or unexpected sounds
- Movement in your surroundings
- Weather changes that affect outdoor work
- Equipment that seems off or malfunctioning
- Blocked pathways or exits
- Coworkers who are distracted

Hazard recognition isn't just about seeing a problem. If you spot a hazard, you need to do something about it. When you notice a hazard:

- **Stop and assess.** Is this something you can safely fix, or do you need to report it?
- **Take action, if authorized.** Examples: mark off a wet floor or remove a broken tool from service.
- **Report what you see.** Tell your supervisor immediately or follow the hazard reporting procedure.
- **Warn others.** Make sure coworkers nearby are aware of the issue.

Examples of commonly overlooked hazards:

- A blocked fire exit
- Frayed electrical cords
- Loose handrails or guardrails
- Poor lighting in high-traffic areas
- Leaks, spills, or clutter that could cause someone to fall



Near misses (a situation where an accident almost happened) are a sign that something needs attention. Report near misses so hazards can be corrected before someone gets hurt.



Hazard recognition should become part of how you work as you adopt a constant awareness of what could go wrong and what you can do to stay safe.



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Build better habits:

- Make time before each task to check your surroundings
- Inspect tools, cords, ladders, and equipment before use
- Stay aware of your posture, movements, and workspace
- Don't accept unsafe conditions as normal
- Practice situational awareness
- Follow all safety procedures, even during routine tasks
- Report all hazards and near misses
- Speak up if something feels off
- Encourage coworkers to speak up about hazards too

Every employee plays a role in recognizing and controlling hazards. The sooner a hazard is noticed, the easier it is to fix.

➤ Speak up, stay alert, and take responsibility for your safety and the safety of those around you.

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