

SAFETY AUDITS IN TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSE ENVIRONMENTS

COURSE OUTLINE

- **What exactly is a “safety audit”, and what is it for?**
 - A safety audit is a review that identifies hazards and risks in a facility or vehicle.
 - It can help to improve safety programs, protect workers, prevent accidents, and comply with OSHA and DOT regulations.
- **In a warehouse, your supervisor or manager will usually build an internal “auditing team” that will...**
 - Conduct an inspection.
 - Interview you and your coworkers.
 - Make sure your facility meets industry safety standards.
- **But sometimes, safety audits are conducted by an external company.**
 - In this case, their investigators are in charge of the process.
- **For commercial vehicles, the DOT may send an FMCSA-certified auditor to your workplace.**
 - However, at other times, these audits can be completed online.
- **There are three major types of safety audits, addressing...**
 - Hazard identification.
 - Compliance with regulatory standards.
 - The overall effectiveness of your facility’s safety program.
- **Some audits tackle all of these issues at once.**
- **You can’t find solutions to problems that you don’t know about.**
 - Which is why the first step in any safety audit is a comprehensive search for potential hazards, called a “workplace analysis”.

- **This typically begins with a physical inspection of your work environment. The audit team will look for general hazards in the facility, such as...**
 - Cluttered work areas.
 - Damaged or uneven flooring.
 - Insufficient lighting.
 - Any hazardous materials.
- **They will also examine tools and equipment to make sure that they are right for the jobs they're being used for, and that they are in good condition.**
 - The analysis can even include an assessment of the factors that are associated with the organization of individual workstations or your truck's cab, and their ergonomic impact.
- **In addition to a physical inspection, a workplace analysis should also examine...**
 - Your company's policies and procedures.
 - How they might affect on-the-job safety.
- **Your knowledge and opinions are important to this process.**
 - While you may not be in charge of your company's workplace analysis, you can still help to make sure that it goes well.
 - After all, no one knows your job better than you do.
- **So you might be asked to inspect your own work area as well as equipment for damage or potential hazards.**
- **If you do find any problems during your inspection, it's important that you immediately report them to...**
 - The audit team.
 - Your supervisor or the company's safety director.
- **After you complete an evaluation of your work area, an auditor might also interview you.**
 - So think about how you do your job.
 - Be ready to make recommendations about how it could be done more safely.
- **When part of your workplace is "on wheels", you might think that safety audits really don't apply to you.**
 - But driving an unsafe vehicle can be just as dangerous as working in a hazardous warehouse.

- **That's why the DOT requires that their motor carrier safety audits include both...**
 - The trucks in your fleet.
 - Your warehouse or other home base.
- **This process helps to ensure that your company is complying with all Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Regulations.**
- **You should prepare as much as you can for these audits.**
 - Failing them can lead to some hefty fines and even your company's FMCSA registration being revoked.
- **An FMCSA auditor will review various documents and materials to verify that you and your employer are doing everything possible to maintain safe work conditions.**
- **They will review your company's safety program and procedures, focusing on six areas...**
 - General.
 - Driver.
 - Operations.
 - Vehicle.
 - Hazardous materials.
 - Accidents.
- **To satisfy the "General" requirement, all motor carriers must have proof that they...**
 - Have liability insurance.
 - Are maintaining an "accident register".
- **The "Driver" category is where you may come in.**
 - To start, you must have a valid CMV license if you are a driver.
 - You should have also taken and passed regular drug and alcohol tests... and kept records of them.
- **It's important to keep track of these documents, so you don't have to waste time looking for them when the auditor comes around.**

- **Next, the auditor will look at “Operational” safety.**
 - They’ll need to see Hours of Service records as well as logs of any driver traffic violations.
 - That’s why you always need to keep your HOS log up to date and report any incidents that do occur to your supervisor as soon as possible.
- **Even when you are driving safely, if your truck isn’t maintained properly, it could spell disaster.**
 - For the “Vehicle” portion of the audit, the auditor will need to verify that your CMV has a schedule for regular maintenance, repair and inspection.
 - So 14 months' worth of inspection reports must always be kept in your vehicle.
- **When it comes to transporting hazardous materials, you need to use extra precautions.**
 - So for the “Hazardous Materials” portion of the audit, the auditor will ask for proof that you have completed the required training to work with HAZMATs and have the proper placards and labels for the materials that you handle.
- **The last category that the FMCSA auditor will look at is “Accidents”.**
 - If any driver-related accidents or injuries have occurred, carriers have to keep records of the incident.
 - So if you are involved in an accident, always give your supervisor an accurate and thorough description of exactly what happened.
- **In some cases, your company may be able to submit all of these documents online rather than having an auditor come on-site.**
 - But even in these cases, the audits should be taken very seriously.
- **One essential part of a safety audit is evaluating the “systems of controls” in your warehouse.**
 - These are physical or procedural controls that are used to minimize the hazards that are associated with your job.
- **They are called "systems" of controls for a reason.**
 - They work together to protect you, but that doesn’t mean that they all function the same way.

- **In fact, OSHA’s “Hierarchy of Controls” identifies...**
 - The various types of controls that can exist in a workplace.
 - How effective each type is.
- **At the top is the “Elimination” of a potential hazard, and guarantees that the hazard no longer exists.**
 - In a warehouse it can be something like ending the use of a hazardous material or removing hazardous equipment from a work area.
- **Next is “Substitution”.**
 - If a hazard can’t be completely eliminated, your facility can substitute it with something that poses less of a risk.
 - Such as swapping out a highly hazardous chemical for one that is less hazardous.
- **Following “Elimination” and “Substitution” in the hierarchy are "Engineering Controls".**
 - These are physical control mechanisms in your facility or on your equipment that help protect you from hazards.
- **For instance, speed-limiting devices could be installed on the forklifts in your warehouse to prevent them from moving too fast and possibly hitting a pedestrian who stepped into their path (some trucks have speed-limiters as well).**
- **A guard on a storage rack is another example of an Engineering Control.**
 - It's there to protect you from potentially falling objects.
- **“Administrative Controls” provide the next level of protection.**
 - These are the rules and procedures that are set up to make your environment as safe a place to work as possible.
- **For example, putting a "no smoking" policy in place in an area that contains flammable materials, to help prevent a fire or explosion from occurring.**
- **Drivers’ “Hours of Service” requirements are another example of administrative controls.**
 - These limits prevent CMV drivers from over-extending themselves, and help to prevent accidents by making sure that they get the rest that they need to drive safely.

- **Personal protective equipment is at the bottom of the “Hierarchy of Controls”, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t important.**
 - It’s just the last line of defense against injury.
 - It is used to protect you from the problems that might occur even though administrative and engineering controls are in place... not instead of them.
- **As part of a workplace analysis your supervisor will want to make sure that you’re using the correct PPE for the work that you do, and using it properly.**
 - You should also examine your PPE yourself, to verify that it’s in good condition.
 - Gloves that have worn thin or high-visibility clothing that has faded will not protect you.
- **While you may not have had a part in setting up the controls in your work environment, it’s important to make sure that everyone uses them.**
 - So as part of an audit you may be asked to monitor how the controls in your area are working.
 - If you find any potential problems, you need to report them immediately.
- **Warehouses can be very large places, which means that an audit team has a lot of ground to cover.**
 - And commercial motor vehicles can have a lot of “moving parts” to keep an eye on as well.
 - So doing your own inspection of your work area or vehicle can help to make sure that no hazards “slip through the cracks”.
- **In a warehouse you want to first check to see that all pathways are free from clutter.**
 - Make sure extension cords are only used when they should be. They aren't meant to be permanent fixtures, just "temporary outlets".
- **If you need to string a cord across a walkway, be sure you tape it down so nobody trips.**
 - Put cords away as soon as you're finished with them.
- **Blocked aisles can create an immediate tripping hazard.**
 - They can also prevent people from getting to safety showers, eyewash stations, fire extinguishers and exits... which could be a real problem in an emergency!
 - So you need to make sure that these paths are clear.

- **Similarly, in a truck a cluttered cab can obstruct your view of the road, interfere with your controls and block access to emergency equipment.**
 - And a disorganized trailer or bed can lead to trip hazards and even damage to your load.
 - So you should always keep your vehicle clean and organized.
- **You should also inspect the equipment and tools that are in your work area or vehicle.**
 - Look for any dents, frayed cords, or dull blades.
 - All of these can lead to serious accidents.
- **If you're in a warehouse and have your own workstation, take a look at how it's set up.**
 - If you constantly have to move at awkward angles or make repetitive motions to get your work done, it could lead to an ergonomic injury.
 - So if you can make your workstation more “ergonomically friendly”, do it!
- **Ergonomic injuries can be common for drivers, too.**
 - You should check that you can comfortably reach the wheel and any controls you need access to!
 - If you're loading or unloading a truck, you need to know how to lift or move the load safely as well... without straining your back or shoulders.
- **If you're working with hazardous materials...**
 - Make sure that you can identify each material, its hazards, and the safe work practices you should use when working with it.
 - You can find this information in the material's Safety Data Sheet.
- **Remember, if anything changes in your work area, such as the addition of new equipment, you need to make sure you are up to date with any training that you need to work safely with it.**
- **When most people hear the words “safety audit” they think about inspecting their workplace, vehicle and equipment.**
 - But you can't forget about yourself.
- **This "self-assessment", or "personal audit" is important too. To stay safe, you have to look at...**
 - How aware you are of what's going on in your work environment.
 - How well you follow safety procedures and protocols yourself.

- **Start by reviewing your company's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to make sure you know them inside and out.**
 - SOPs help us do our jobs more efficiently by preventing mistakes and misunderstandings that can lead to accidents and injuries.
- **So never ignore them because you think they aren't important.**
 - Following them is essential... and they apply to everyone.
 - Never skip a procedure because you're in a hurry.
 - Remember, safety is always the top priority.
- **As you continue your "personal audit", think about how well you know your facility or vehicle.**
 - Are you able to locate all exits and fire escapes in a warehouse?
 - Would you be able to find them in the dark if you had to?
 - Do you know where all of the emergency supplies in your truck are?
- **If your workplace has them, you need to know where safety showers and eyewash stations are located in your warehouse as well.**
 - You'll want to be able to find them in a hurry if you or a coworker are splashed with a hazardous chemical.
- **You should also determine where the nearest first-aid kit is located.**
 - If an emergency occurs, you won't want to waste time searching for it.
- **Make sure you know where fire extinguishers are kept too, as well as what type should be used in various situations.**
 - Using the wrong one could actually spread a fire instead of putting it out.
- **But don't worry, you don't have to figure all of this out on your own.**
 - Your company's safety training program will help to make you aware of potential hazards, as well as how to prevent accidents.
- **This could involve...**
 - Courses on general safety issues such as back safety, hearing conservation and personal protective equipment.
 - OSHA and DOT regulations.
 - Issues that are more specific to your particular operations.
- **It's important that you take these courses seriously, so that you are prepared for any problems you may encounter.**

- **Sometimes, no matter how careful we are or what steps we take to protect ourselves, accidents still happen.**
 - So part of conducting a safety audit is making sure everyone in your workplace knows what to do if an accident or another emergency occurs when you're in your warehouse or on the road.
- **First, check to see that emergency numbers are posted by all phones in your work area.**
 - If you're on the road, they should be in your cell phone.
 - This includes EMT, fire and police departments.
 - In some places you can reach these services by simply dialing 9-1-1.
- **Any internal emergency numbers should also be posted, such as...**
 - The Safety Department.
 - Security Personnel.
 - Your company's Fire and Rescue Team.
- **If an incident occurs, everyone in your warehouse should know the procedures to follow.**
 - You should start by helping anyone who has been injured get the medical assistance that they need.
- **At this point, the details of the accident need to be documented in a report so that it can be thoroughly investigated.**
 - Investigators will speak to other coworkers who witnessed the event to get as complete a picture of what happened as possible.
- **You also need to know what to do if an incident occurs while you're on the road.**
 - First, find a safe place to park, then put on your hazard lights and call 911.
- **In the case of a fire, you should exit the vehicle after you park it and call for help.**
 - If the fire is small and you think you can fight it safely, use your fire extinguisher to try and extinguish the flames.
 - If this doesn't work, put as much distance between yourself and your truck as you can, and wait for the local fire department.
- **Always report any incidents.**
 - No injury or accident is too minor.
 - They all need to be looked at, to determine what caused them.

- **You should report any "near misses" as well.**
 - A "near miss" is a narrowly avoided incident or accident.
 - After all, your company can't fix a problem they don't know about.
- **After you file a report, you should verify that an "accident investigation" has been started.**
 - That way everyone knows that the problem has been identified and action is being taken.

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **A safety audit is a comprehensive review of a work environment that identifies hazards and risks to the people who work there.**
- **The Department of Transportation (DOT) conducts their own safety audits to ensure that motor carriers, their drivers and their vehicles are all complying with Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulations.**
- **An audit will start with a “workplace analysis”, an inspection of a warehouse or vehicle’s physical environment for hazards, as well as reviewing its safety procedures and policies.**
- **You should be aware of the “Systems of Controls” that are used in your environment, including Hazard Elimination, Substitution, Engineering Controls, Administrative Controls, and Personal Protective Equipment.**
- **Conducting an inspection of your own work area or your vehicle is an important part of a safety audit. You know your job better than anyone, so you can offer important insight regarding any potential hazards that may exist there.**
- **Doing a “personal” safety audit can help you determine how well you know and follow safety policies and procedures yourself.**
- **You should always report any incident or “near miss” that you see occur... no matter how “minor” it may seem.**
- **Now that you know how you can play an active part in your company’s safety audits, you can help to make sure that your workplace or vehicle is the safest it can be... for both you and your coworkers!**