Eight Signs You May Need Refresher Training



What’s at Stake

Things are constantly changing in many areas of people’s lives. Your job likely sees a lot of change, where new methods of doing things are introduced, potentially affecting your safety and health.

What’s the Danger

It’s common for experienced workers to think that they have been there, done that and know their jobs inside out. Believing that there’s nothing new under the sun and therefore, retraining is a waste of time is a dangerous assumption. What you don’t know can indeed hurt you, maybe even kill you.

Example

A power failure in a chemical facility causes a release of hydrogen sulfide and sulfur dioxide gases. Two emergency response workers who are exhausted remove their self-contained breathing gear and inhale the deadly gases. One worker recovers in hospital; the other worker dies.

The company is fined heavily for several safety and health violations, including failure to provide refresher training for emergency responders.

How to Protect Yourself

Safety retraining is mandatory in many jobs. Without it, workers cannot be recertified in their areas of expertise.

Your job may not legally require refresher training. But that doesn’t mean you don’t need it. Here are some signs that it’s time for retraining. Do any apply to you or to your workplace in general? If so, talk to your supervisor.

1. You’re assigned to a new job that builds on ongoing safety and technical knowledge. By taking refresher training, you can review previous safety training before learning new tasks and associated safety measures.

2. A serious incident causes substantial damage to your plant, but fortunately no injuries occur. An investigation reveals that unsafe work procedures caused the damage.
3. A worker suffers a lost-time injury and is off work for several weeks. An investigation shows that the worker was not following certain safety requirements, which led to the injury.
4. New equipment is being introduced to a production line. While its basic operation is similar to that of older equipment, there are some important differences that workers need to be trained on.
5. New government safety regulations have been implemented that will have a significant impact on your workplace.
6. Your supervisor observes workers taking dangerous shortcuts, such as not using personal protective equipment.
7. Your workplace has gone three years without a serious injury or fatality. Workers are becoming complacent about safety and an incident could be right around the corner.
8. You are assigned a task that you haven’t performed in six months. You are a little fuzzy on the order of the steps and realize that doing them in the wrong order can ruin expensive equipment and possibly endanger workers. You need to check with someone who knows.

Final Word

Being confident in your abilities is admirable, but being over-confident and assuming that you never need to take refresher training is simply wrong. If you aren’t being offered retraining, ask for it.