



Addressing **DISTRACTIONS** on Mine Sites

Distractions on mine sites can be deadly. The scale and power of equipment used, coupled with ever-changing site conditions, requires complete and undivided attention be given to the task being performed. The aggregates industry goes to great efforts to train miners about the hazards associated with mining – but even years of excellent training can be undone with just seconds of distraction. Distractions can, and do, result in catastrophes that cause major damage, severe injuries, and death.

dis•trac•tion (n)

1. A thing that prevents someone from giving full attention to something else.

Everyone — including safety professionals, managers and miners — must be aware of the role distractions play in accidents. Here are proactive ways you can address one of the greatest causes of accidents and injuries:

PLAN

Think ahead. Involve the whole workforce. Be proactive.

- Management has the responsibility for establishing the message that reducing workplace distraction is a priority, particularly when considering work planning and scheduling.
- Set policies and establish messages that clearly communicate the risks of workplace distraction and how best to avoid distractions in the workplace.
- Consider establishing a multi-discipline team that represents both management and work crews to participate on planning activities.
- If data is available, look for trends in incident occurrences that indicate workplace distraction as a contributing factor.
- Review any current safety practices or policies related to distraction to evaluate if they meet the needs of the workplace and identify areas that can be improved upon.

continued on reverse

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Find additional resources on NSSGA's Health & Safety webpage at:
nssga.org/distractions

IDENTIFY DISTRACTIONS AS HAZARDS

Increase awareness. Be mindful about distractions. Speak up.

- Specify policies against multi-tasking (e.g., driving and texting, conducting tasks while using cell phones, etc.).

- Identify common or potential distractions as part of a job hazard assessment before beginning work.
- Encourage a culture where all employees can check in with one another about distractions or mental fatigue without accusation.

TRAIN

Take all opportunities to train. Revisit often. Be innovative.

- Training should emphasize that workers should not interrupt or distract another worker while he/she is conducting a task. Don't be a distraction to your co-worker.
- Develop a resource library for distraction training. Find materials from YouTube,

MSHA, OSHA, National Safety Council, NSSGA, colleagues, and more.

- Use nudges or other reminders to keep employees mindful of the task at hand. It is easy for a mind to wander when performing a routine or repetitive task, and reminders can help bring attention back to where it is most needed.

ESTABLISH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Formalize commitment. Use administrative controls. Write it down.

- Ensure existing policies and procedures emphasize the importance of maintaining focus on the task at hand.
- Establish policies addressing key causes of distractions: cell phones, texting, fatigue, etc.

- Include an assessment of distractions or lack of focus as a potential cause in incident investigation procedures. Share findings (without blame or targeting individuals) to increase awareness about the role distractions play in accidents.
- Add the hazard of distraction to job hazard assessment forms or programs.
- Consider requiring use of "do not disturb" warning signs and barriers or barricades for specific tasks (e.g., welding) to reduce distraction hazards.

CHECK AND REVIEW

Use data. Continuously improve. Share findings.

- Review previous accident investigations and reviews to identify and highlight where distractions could have been or were a contributing factor.

- Ensure that safety conversations do not become a distraction – including those conversations that are part of a behavior-based safety program.
- Review overall programs and ensure that distractions are considered as part of accident investigations, day-to-day operations, and more.