

# Staying Safe With Effective Communication

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I'm a talker, a bit of a chatterbox when you get to know me actually, I have even been told that I could talk underwater with a golf ball in my mouth. However, in the last few years, I have been trying to improve my communication style and listening skills to make sure what I am saying is clear, concise, and meaningful. The reason behind this is because communication is not only crucial for being successful in my role, but it can also keep you safe. Poor communication can not only hinder the implementation of a health and safety culture but can also end up contributing to hazards in the workplace (Group, 2020).

## Types of Communication

There are many ways in which communication can keep you safe. Effective communication can be verbal communication, written and/or visual. Each type of communication serves an intended purpose, and when used effectively, can create a safe working environment.

### Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the use of language to transfer information through speaking or sign language (Indeed, 2020). Verbal communication in the workplace is often used in one or more of the following ways to convey safety:



- Safety Presentations
- Morning meetings/Toolbox meetings
- One on one conversations
- Video/phone calls

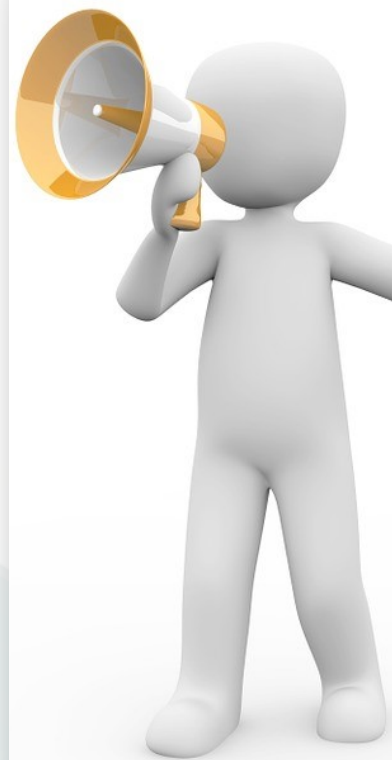
Conveying a safety message effectively through verbal communication needs to be clear and direct. It is essential to speak up and communicate when you feel unsafe, or if the job is unsafe to proceed. For verbal communication to be truly effective, you not

only need to be able to put forward any safety issues or concerns, but you also need to be able to actively listen to the information being presented.

### Written Communication

Written communication is the act of writing, typing, texting or messaging to convey information (Indeed, 2020). Writing is commonly used to share safety information through:

- Procedures and Instructions
- JSEA / Take 5s
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
- Legislation and Guidelines
- Permits and Licences
- Emails and text messages



## Summary/Quote



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As you can see, there is a wide variety of different document types that relate directly and indirectly to safety. When writing a safety document, it is vital to be clear, use language that is understood by all levels of the workplace and if possible, avoid using jargon, and technical terms where they are not required. In a workplace that may employ people where English is a second language, there may be a requirement to provide documents and signs in another language to ensure everybody understands.

### Visual Communication

Visual communication is the act of using pictures, words, quotes or colours to convey information quickly and clearly, in a way that demands attention and presents information. Safety is presented visually to us every day in the form of:

- Street signs and traffic lights
- Safety placards
- Charts and graphs
- Photographs
- Infographics



For a visual aid to be effective, it must be clear, to the point, serve a purpose, be appropriately sized and be placed in a prominent location to which its content is relevant. Visuals are also often used as an aid during verbal and written communication to help reinforce important points. However, it is essential not to have too many signs or visual aids as a human can become sign blind.

## How to Communicate Safety Effectively in your Workplace

Now we have looked at the types of communication we can take a quick look at how to effectively communicate safety in your workplace. Whether you work in an office, on-site, remotely or in many different places, you can always communicate safely through (Elliotts, 2016):

- Group emails and newsletter – to communicate changes to safety procedures and protocols as they happen.
- Having appropriate signage – place safety posters where they are needed, such as a how-to wash your hands effectively in the bathrooms or what safety equipment is needed in a particular area.
- Hold staff meetings/toolbox meetings – both virtual and in-person meetings on safety allow all parties to be able to discuss safety procedures and concerns in real-time.
- Infographics – use infographics to quickly send safety tips and information to everybody through emails, newsletters, noticeboards and social media.

Communicating is not only about how to convey a point or idea, but it is also about listening and understanding what is being communicated. By being able to effectively communicate safety through one or more method and being able to listen and understand what is being conveyed you and your work colleagues will be safe at work, on the road and at home. Remember safe doesn't start and stop when at work.

If you or your workplace requires advice on how to effectively communicate safety or if you need any other safety advice to your employees or others, please give us a call on 9468 0338 or [enquiries@integratesustainability.com.au](mailto:enquiries@integratesustainability.com.au).

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## References

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