

FAMILIARITY BREEDS NEGLECT

This is a quick and simple exercise that demonstrates how people do not pay attention to familiar items. The discussion that follows makes the connection between this exercise and the existence of hazards in the workplace that are often overlooked.

WHEN TO USE THIS EXERCISE

This exercise can be used when you are conducting any training on workplace hazards or general safety awareness. It can also be used to build activity into any safety meeting. This exercise works best if it is conducted with small to medium sized groups (six to twenty five participants).

DURATION

Allow 5 to 10 minutes.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

A non-digital type watch from a participant.

HOW TO RUN THIS EXERCISE

STEP 1 Look around the room and find a participant who is wearing a non-digital type watch.

NOTE: The ideal watch to use for this exercise is one that has an hour hand, a minute hand and a second hand.

Ask this participant if you can use their watch for a few minutes.

STEP 2 Once you have a suitable watch (or another suitable item) ask the participant how many times they would look at their watch per day?

Get a response.

Pass an appropriate comment about their response e.g. if you look at it this many times per day you should be quite familiar with it then.

STEP 3 Say to the participant: *“Okay, let’s suppose you lost your watch and I found it. Now before I give it back to you I just want to ensure it is yours by asking you a few questions.”* Ask the participant questions like those below and get their responses.

- What brand/make is your watch?
- Is there any writing on the face of the watch? If so, what is the writing?
- What colour is the face of the watch?
- What colour are the hour and minute hands on the watch?
- Does the watch have a second hand? What colour is it?
- Does the watch have roman numerals, numbers or other types of figures on the watch? What are they?



- Does the watch have all twelve digits/markings on it? Which are missing, if any?
- What colour are the numbers/markings?

NOTE: Add other questions about distinguishing features of this watch.

STEP 4 Jokingly decide whether or not to give the watch back to the participant and then conduct the group discussion.

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

It is unlikely that the participant will be able to accurately answer all these questions about the features of their own watch even if they do look at it many times per day. This physically demonstrates that people often don't pay attention to familiar items. The same type of thing can happen with hazards in the workplace. To process this exercise and make the connection between this example and overlooking hazards in the workplace ask questions along the lines of:

- Why do you think people don't pay attention to the detail on their watches even though they look at them many times per day?
- Does this apply to other things we are familiar with? What are some examples?
- What about our workplace - can we become familiar with warning signs, etc., and not be aware of the information contained on them?
- Does this apply to hazards in our workplace?
- How can we become more aware of the hazards that exist in our workplace?
- How can we become more focused on safety requirements in the workplace so they are not overlooked?

ATTACHMENTS

None.