



Why We Do Walkthroughs

Even though you feel as healthy as can be, you probably go to the doctor periodically for a checkup. Do you enjoy that? Probably not. Is it worth the effort? Sometimes, the doctor tells you what you already know (lose weight, stop smoking, get exercise). Sometimes the doc will discover something new and alarming, something that needs to be addressed right away.

Facility walkthroughs are our version of a periodic checkup. They give us a feel for how your safety program is going. Are people wearing the right personal protective equipment? Do we see hazardous practices, such as blowing dust off oneself with compressed air?

The walkthrough does more than that, though. We can see if there were changes in your operations. Perhaps you switched to a different type of adhesive or paint. Maybe you got in a new piece of equipment. You could have rearranged the shop, so what used to be an obvious exit no longer is. Keeping up to date on your operations means we can alert you to new hazards – or we can update your safety programs so they don't cover hazards that no longer exist.

We can also alert you if there's a need for new training or new programs. If you bought your first forklift, you may not know all users need training. If we see that new forklift, we can bring that need to your attention.

The walkthrough helps us ensure that your annual Right to Know/Hazard Communication training accurately reflects the products you use. That makes the training more relevant to your employees.

The walkthroughs are an effective training tool.

- When we do training for your employees, we often use pictures from your walkthrough to alert your employees to hazards, challenging them to point out what was wrong. From talking with them, we know that's effective. And we've seen proof of its effectiveness in the following year's walkthrough. Show them pictures of unlabeled containers, and we can bet they'll get better at labeling containers.
 - Don't worry – those pictures are specifically for your use. We don't use your pictures at your competitor's facility (We don't need to. They have their own).
- As we walk through your shop and talk with employees, we can teach them. Showing them how a grinder should be adjusted is more effective than writing a program that says how it should be set.

The walkthrough provides proof to your employees that you care about their safety and health. We talk with them as we walk through, explaining what we're doing, asking how things are going. Particularly from employees who've worked with us for years, we'll get comments about how they appreciate this effort to help create a safe workplace.

We often do the walkthrough alone, without anyone from management. That has certain benefits: we can be more thorough and usually can work faster, because we aren't distracted by talking with someone else. Employees may be more open to talking to us. But it has disadvantages, too. If the owner or manager walks with us, we can point out what problems we see and explain why we think they're problems. Some items can be corrected right away. We can get explanations of things that puzzle us or find out that what we think is a problem really isn't.

Even if you don't walk with us, we'll do our best to let you know if there was anything we consider in need of immediate correction before we leave your shop. And we'll gladly do a run-through of our findings that day.

The end result of the walkthrough is a report. We don't mention everything you're doing right, but we do try to let you know when we've seen obvious improvements. We try to prioritize, based on our judgment of the hazard and risk. That's a combination of how much exposure people have and how serious a negative outcome could be. Life safety issues, such as locked exit doors, nearly always rank high – if people can't escape in a fire, they'll die. Things that are violations but not likely to result in someone being injured will rank as low. Paperwork violations, such as not displaying your hazardous waste license, will rank very low.

We try to be comprehensive in our walkthroughs. We don't want you to be surprised by the findings of an official inspector. We don't want you to say: "Why didn't you tell me about...?" But we know we'll miss things. We don't see everything that goes on. Situations change. Even if you corrected every item found in a walkthrough, an official inspector may find violations.

It's up to you to decide what you do with our walkthrough findings. We realize some items will be difficult to correct. You may judge the hazard differently from us and decide some don't need correcting. Some may be postponed because of financial issues. And some may have been rare occurrences, when we just caught your shop on a bad day.

So when we do a walkthrough for you, let us know if you want to walk with us. Let us know if you question any findings or need more explanation of what corrective measures are needed. Let us know if you need help or resources to make any fixes. We appreciate the feedback as it helps us serve you better.