

# Finding hazards:

# Proven methods to identify them

Finding hazards in the workplace begins with learning how to recognize potential causes of injuries and illnesses. It requires an ability to “see” the workplace with a different perspective (lens) and that takes knowledge about the fundamental risks in your work environment. It also takes practice to develop and fine-tune your ability to see hazards, which is vitally important to the injury prevention process.

## The four ways to find hazards

There are four primary ways to find workplace hazards and the best practice is to use all of them to get a complete picture:

**1**

### Hazard reports

Invite all employees to tell you about hazards they find in the workplace. This can be formal, through a hazard and safety concern form ([saif.com/S1253](https://saif.com/S1253)), or it can be just a verbal report to a supervisor. For this to be effective, it's important to thank all employees who submit reports and address the hazards identified in a timely manner.

**2**

### Injury reports

While this method is reactive because it is after an injury has already occurred, it's an important way to help identify workplace hazards. Oregon OSHA requires employers to keep track of injuries and to analyze their causes to prevent them from happening again. Proactive businesses use the best practice of analyzing all incidents, even those that don't result in injuries, including near miss reports ([saif.com/S1294](https://saif.com/S1294)).

Ensure that employees know how to report injuries in a system that is written and trackable. Keeping this record will help with other aspects of a safety program including workers' compensation claim management and injury recording on the OSHA 300 log.

**3**

### Safety inspections

This method of finding hazards is the most proactive and to be effective, it should be done regularly. While Oregon OSHA requires that most workplaces are inspected at least quarterly, employers can implement more frequent inspections or informal walk-throughs to look for hazards.

## Learn more

For more info about identifying and controlling hazards, visit our common hazards in the workplace page ([saif.com/hazardid](https://saif.com/hazardid)).

It's been said that the **GOAL** of a successful business leader is to **Get Out And Look** and this is definitely true when it comes to safety. Observing employees working and surveying the entire workplace is critical to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. Every person doing the inspections must be trained in how to recognize the hazard and when serious injury or fatality risk may be present:

- Work surface and walkway hazards ([saif.com/falls](https://saif.com/falls))
- Machinery hazards ([saif.com/S1290](https://saif.com/S1290))
- Electrical hazards ([saif.com/S1288](https://saif.com/S1288))
- Chemical hazards ([saif.com/ghs](https://saif.com/ghs))
- Environmental hazards ([saif.com/S1287](https://saif.com/S1287))
- Ergonomic hazards ([saif.com/ergo](https://saif.com/ergo))
- Unsafe work practices ([saif.com/S1174](https://saif.com/S1174))



## 4

### Hazard analysis

Safety practitioners have other tools in their toolbelt to find hazards before someone gets hurt. There are many hazard analysis tools to choose from and they all serve an important purpose in drilling down to find risks and vulnerabilities during the process of work.

These tools often work because they require an assessment before any work is performed or task is completed. The process of thinking through what kinds of hazards could occur is the key to stopping them from happening. Some of these tools are:

- Job hazard analysis (JHA) or job safety analysis (JSA) ([saif.com/S1262](https://saif.com/S1262))
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) assessment ([saif.com/S1252](https://saif.com/S1252))
- Hazard risk assessment
- Serious injury or fatality (SIF) hazard review ([saif.com/S1097E](https://saif.com/S1097E))
- Chemical risk assessment
- Hazardous energy assessment
- Machine guarding assessment
- New machine risk assessment
- Emergency planning
- Pre-task planning for construction and projects ([saif.com/S1250](https://saif.com/S1250))
- Safety through design assessment
- Safety observations ([saif.com/S1273](https://saif.com/S1273))

Keep in mind that the links listed are examples and there are many ways to use these tools.

### Summary

Finding hazards is critical to being able to effectively control them. Luckily, there are proven strategies that all businesses can use to find hazards, including hazard reports, injury reports, safety inspections, and hazard analyses.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Conduct a safety inspection of your facility as a group and make notes of what each of you find. Compare the lists—talk about the hazards that appear most and those that appear the least.
- Write a job hazard analysis (JHA) ([saif.com/S1262](https://saif.com/S1262)) of one of the least liked or highest risk tasks at your organization. What hazards did you uncover?
- Group discussion: Talk about how you find hazards at your organization. Could you improve the process?
- Use a PPE assessment to find hazards at your organization ([saif.com/S1082\\_word](https://saif.com/S1082_word)). As you review each task, it will also provide an opportunity to discuss controls for them.