

Shipyards Worker Safety Talk

Shipyards work can be exciting, and action packed, but it does come with serious risks. From welding and steel fabrication to blasting, pipefitting, rigging, and coating, the jobs are tough and often take place in very challenging locations such as below deck, inside tight spaces, on scaffolds, busy docks, or out in rough weather. Staying safe in these conditions takes teamwork, training, and consistently being aware of the risks.

Hazards Common in Shipyard Employment

1. Physical hazards

- Falls from heights (from decks, scaffolds, open edges)
- Slips, trips, or falls on cluttered or slippery surfaces
- Moving or falling loads during rigging or crane operations

2. Hazardous energy

- Start-ups or unexpected motion of machinery
- Electrical shocks or arc flash incidents
- Inadequate lockout/tagout procedures

3. Chemical and environmental exposure

- Welding fumes, dust, paint or coating chemicals
- Toxic atmospheres in confined spaces, lack of oxygen, or presence of harmful gases
- Poor ventilation in enclosed or partially enclosed areas

4. Fire and hot work risks

- Sparks, open flames from cutting, welding, or burning tasks
- Flammable materials nearby

5. Personal protection failures

- Inadequate or absent protective equipment for eyes, face, hands, hearing, feet
- No fall arrest systems where needed

6. Coordination hazards

- Overlapping tasks by different employers causing unintended exposure
- Confusion over who is responsible for what safety task



Key Safety Responsibilities

- All workers must receive training **before** beginning their assigned tasks. Training must cover both general hazards and site-specific hazards.
- Training must be delivered in a language and vocabulary that the worker understands.
- Recordkeeping of injuries and illnesses must include all workers. A clear system for reporting hazards, injuries, or illnesses must be established and maintained. No policies should discourage or penalize reporting.

Control Measures & Safe Practices

1. Use of proper equipment and controls

- Employ correct PPE: eye/face protection, gloves, respiratory protection, hearing protection, hard hats, protective footwear, fall arrest gear
- Ensure machinery has proper guards, lockout/tagout systems installed and enforced

2. Safe work in confined/enclosed spaces

- Test atmosphere (oxygen level, flammable/toxic gases) before entry
- Provide ventilation, rescue plan, and allow for communication with those outside

3. Hot work and fire protection protocols

- Establish fire watches, remove flammable materials, ensure fire suppression tools are on hand
- Follow proper procedures for welding, cutting, burning

4. Traffic, rigging, and material handling

- Only trained riggers to handle load preparation, lifting, moving loads
- Keep safe zones, avoid overhead work when others are below

Summary

Shipyards work is demanding and often dangerous. From falls and heavy loads to toxic fumes, fire risks, and tight-space hazards, every task brings its own challenges. Staying safe means relying on solid training, proper equipment, and consistent attention to the risks on the job.

Discussion Points

1. *How can task rotation and ergonomic design reduce fatigue and long-term injuries?*
2. *What strategies best control dust and airborne particulates in production areas?*