



Distractions

Every day, you use your safety training. You make decisions based on your experience. And you depend on PPE to protect you from hazards. You can bubble wrap yourself in PPE, have 25 years of experience, and understand every safety regulation, but all that won't protect you if you let yourself get distracted while you're at work. Distractions change your focus, they interrupt your thinking, and they significantly increase the chances that you'll have an accident and get injured, or worse.

There are external distractions on the jobsite you can't do much about, like co-workers talking, loud noises, and flashes of light from arc welding. There are external distractions that you can control: turn your cell phone off or set it to Do-Not-Disturb. Turn loud music down or off. Don't get involved in complicated conversations or heated arguments. When you can't eliminate a distraction, work with extra care. Keep in mind that some distractions are helpful: Back-up alarms, horns and flashing lights can warn you about danger.

Internal distractions are ones that you create and bring to work with you. Personal, family, or financial problems are examples. They can eat at you all day, make you feel drained, and keep you from concentrating. The holiday season can work against us, in that it brings another set of shopping, meal planning, and family obligation distractions.

Try to minimize the impact of distractions:

- Get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can cause you to be more irritable, distracted, and scatterbrained. It's very hard to concentrate when you're tired.
- Stay hydrated. Even mild dehydration can make you tired, sleepy, and less able to focus.
- Take a break. When your mind is wandering or you start daydreaming, take a short break to clear your head. If you can't take a break, try changing your position (sitting, standing, etc.) or location. Just moving around can help.
- Silence your phone. Keep your phone and other electronic devices silenced and out of sight so you won't be tempted to check them. Or power them off completely. If you do have to make or receive an urgent call, take a break and deal with it away from the hazards of the work area.
- Keep your work area clean. Prevent discarded materials, trash, or half-finished projects from distracting you from the task at hand.
- Use music as a tool. Sometimes listening to music can help you focus on your work. But music can be dangerous if it distracts you or keeps you from hearing back-up alarms, warnings, or instructions. Only listen to music when it's safe to



do so. Do not use earbuds to block out noise. Earbuds are not hearing protection.

SAFETY REMINDER

No matter what the source, even a second of distraction can lead to a serious injury or even a fatality.