



OCTOBER 2023

TOOLBOX TALKS

Importance of work planning, Project planning and resources, Navigating project delays

The renewable-energy industry has a variety of unique work conditions. These conditions interact with a person's physical and cognitive abilities, levels of fatigue, situations happening in their personal life, and more. The interconnection of these factors can cause a worker to experience stress while on-the-job.

The U.S. Department of Energy (2009a) wrote, "stress increases as familiarity with a situation decreases." Another important element is understanding how the individual perceives their ability to cope with the stressful situation (U.S. Department of Energy, 2009a). When stress levels become unmanageable, it can reduce the worker's ability to complete a task safely, efficiently, and effectively.

For example, a wind turbine technician and their two partners are driving to site to perform routine maintenance. While this is a familiar task, the start of their day was delayed due to factors outside of their control. The workers feel they might not be able to complete this task on time. As a result, the worker driving was having difficulty focusing on the road. The driver was coming up to an intersection and failed to stop the vehicle. As the driver went through the intersection, they collided with another car.



Project planning is an important human performance improvement tool that can assist with reducing feelings of stress. This process involves "improving communication, foresight, and planning" (U.S. Department of Energy, 2009b).

Having foresight is key to ensure that possible roadblocks are considered during the project planning phase. Receiving input from the workers completing the task is vital as their field experiences will assist with identifying areas where challenges may arise.

An additional consideration surrounds the importance of fostering a psychologically safe work environment. This allows team members to feel comfortable communicating their abilities to perform given work tasks, especially when roadblocks and project delays occur.

When stress becomes unmanageable, it can result in human performance errors, which compromise a worker's ability to complete their work safely, efficiently, and effectively. Collaborative project planning and open communication channels can help to mitigate feelings of stress.

Which stress reduction strategies work well for you?

How have you supported your colleagues during stressful situations at work?

How have managers supported you in the past during times that were stressful? What has been helpful? What was not as helpful?

Based on your experience, what are some factors or situations that have caused roadblocks or delays in previous projects? How did you work through these?

Resources

U.S. Department of Energy. (2009a). *Human performance and improvement handbook: Volume 1: Concepts and principles*. <https://www.standards.doe.gov/standards-documents/1000/1028-BHdbk-2009-v1/@images/file>

U.S. Department of Energy. (2009b). *Human performance and improvement handbook: Volume 2: Human performance tools for individuals, work teams, and management*. <https://www.standards.doe.gov/files/doe-hdbk-1028-2009-human-performance-improvement-handbook-volume-2-human-performance-tools-for-individuals-work-teams-and-management/view>

