

# 5 tips to consider adding to your plant shutdown plan

## Getting employees off of operational autopilot is one strategy that may outperform them all.

Maintaining plant safety is the top priority every day. But a plant shutdown can throw a wrench into your well-oiled gears.

Forklifts, torches, tools, pulleys, chemicals, electrical wires and new equipment may now be in areas where they weren't before. On top of things being out of place,

- Workers are performing shutdown tasks that are not routine.
- Contractors and visitors unfamiliar with your plant may now also be on the floor.
- A demanding completion schedule may require work to be carried out at a fast pace.

Any one of these can open the door for potential significant injuries. Since plant shutdowns are infrequent, the need for safety awareness is heightened.

## In planning for plant shutdown safety, are you considering how plant familiarity might contribute to potential danger?

When making the plant shutdown checklist, it can sometimes be easy to underestimate the need for safety training. After all, employees work at the plant every day so they're familiar with the plant layout and the potential hazards. Employees know it so well, they might be tempted to almost operate on autopilot. But shutdown introduces different hazards and risks, so resetting everyone's safety mindset is a solid best practice.

## Conduct a safety refresher before each shutdown as a strategy to heighten awareness and help keep employees safe.

Everyone has their own preferred way of training, and OSHA provides a lot of great resources. Here are five tips you may want to add to your plan to help elevate safety awareness.

1. Give yourself time to plan. Months before the shutdown, begin planning for the new risks that could be introduced.
2. Hold regular meetings before every shutdown. Even if longtime employees have been through many shutdowns before, every shutdown is different. This is a good time to revisit past shutdowns, and what, if anything, could have gone better.
3. Create a safety training handout showing your normal floor layout and highlight what will likely change during shutdown. Depending on your operation, you may want to designate one person in each area to oversee the safe practices of the shutdown.
4. Put posters in the break room and place highly visible signage around the plant to make contractors, employees and visitors aware of potential hazards.
5. Prior to the plant shutdown, consider doing on-the-floor, on-the-spot quizzes with employees, testing their safety knowledge. If they answer correctly, put their name in a safety training drawing for a prize. Recognize safety-conscious employees with a baseball cap that has a unique design using your company logo. Whatever the prize, it should be something employees can only get by passing the safety quiz.



Training and retraining all employees on the non-routine hazards of each shutdown can help prevent injuries, keep projects on track and keep your company's safety rating intact.