



WORKING AROUND WATER

TOOLBOX TALK SERIES – HAZARDS

June 2023

Whether you are involved in construction, maintenance, or any other occupation that requires working near bodies of water, it is crucial to prioritize safety to prevent accidents and ensure the well-being of yourself and your colleagues. By understanding potential hazards and following appropriate safety measures, we can create a safer work environment.

Key Points to Cover:

1. Recognizing Water Hazards:

- Be aware of potential water hazards at your worksite, such as the Erie Canal, ponds, streams or standing water.
- Consider environmental factors, such as currents, and weather conditions that may affect water safety.
- Identify and understand any specific hazards related to the site, such as hidden debris, deep water, or unstable banks.



2. Water Safety Equipment:

- Ensure that personal flotation devices (PFDs) or life jackets are available and worn when working near water.
- Choose the appropriate type of PFD based on the activity and water conditions.
- Regularly inspect PFDs for damage and ensure they are in good working condition.



3. Water Rescue and Emergency Preparedness:

- Establish and communicate emergency procedures for water-related incidents.
- Ensure that at least one person on site is trained in water rescue techniques and CPR.
- Know the location of rescue equipment, such as throw ropes, life rings, or rescue boats, and keep them easily accessible.



4. Safe Working Distances:

- Maintain a safe working distance from the water's edge to avoid accidental slips or falls.
- Use barricades, warning signs, or designated safety zones to keep unauthorized personnel away from hazardous areas.
- Be cautious of unstable or eroded surfaces near water, which can increase the risk of falls.

5. Electrical Safety:

- Understand and adhere to electrical safety guidelines when working near water.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) or other appropriate electrical protection devices.
- Ensure that electrical equipment is properly grounded and inspected regularly.

6. Communication:

- Establish clear communication channels with colleagues when working near water.
- Use appropriate signaling methods, such as radios or hand signals, to communicate effectively.



- Designate a responsible person to monitor workers' safety and maintain communication with emergency services if needed.

7. Weather Awareness:

- Stay updated on weather conditions, particularly if your work involves being on or near the water.
- Monitor weather forecasts and be prepared to suspend work if severe weather, such as storms or high winds, is imminent.
- Seek shelter immediately in case of lightning or thunderstorms.



Working around water requires vigilance and adherence to safety measures to prevent accidents and ensure the well-being of everyone involved. Always be aware of potential water hazards, wear appropriate personal flotation devices, and establish clear communication and emergency procedures. By prioritizing safety and being prepared for potential risks, we can create a safer work environment when working around water. Stay safe!