



Incidents rarely happen without warning. In most cases, there were signs beforehand — unsafe behaviours, damaged equipment, poor housekeeping, or changing conditions that were ignored. The ability to recognise unsafe acts and unsafe conditions is one of the most powerful tools every worker has to prevent injuries.

Safety is not only the responsibility of supervisors or safety officers. Every worker on site plays a role in identifying and correcting hazards before someone gets hurt.

Understanding the Difference

To prevent incidents, we must understand what we are looking for.

Unsafe Acts are unsafe behaviours by people.

Examples include:

- Not wearing required PPE.
- Taking shortcuts.
- Using tools incorrectly.
- Working without proper authorisation.
- Bypassing guards or safety devices.
- Standing under suspended loads.
- Distracted or reckless behaviour.

Unsafe Conditions are physical hazards in the workplace.

Examples include:

- Damaged tools or equipment.
- Exposed electrical wiring.
- Oil or water spills.
- Poor lighting.
- Missing guardrails.
- Unsafe stacking of materials.
- Blocked emergency exits.

Both unsafe acts and unsafe conditions can lead to serious incidents.

What to Look For on Site

Spotting hazards requires awareness and attention. It means not walking past something that “doesn’t look right.”

When on site, ask yourself:

- Has anything changed since yesterday?
- Is this task being done the correct way?
- Are safety controls in place and being used?
- Is the work area clean and organised?
- Are people working within their training?
- Is equipment in good condition?
- Are weather or environmental conditions increasing risk?

Small details often make the difference between a safe shift and an injury.

What To Do When You Spot Something Unsafe

Recognising a hazard is only the first step. Action must follow.

If you identify an unsafe act or condition:

- Stop the unsafe activity if it is safe to do so.
- Warn the person involved.
- Report the issue to a supervisor or safety representative.
- Remove defective equipment from use.
- Do not assume someone else will deal with it.

Ignoring hazards allows risk to grow. Acting early prevents incidents.





Creating a Safety Mindset

Spotting unsafe acts and conditions is about building a safety mindset. It means staying alert, thinking ahead, and looking out for others. Most incidents can be prevented if hazards are identified and corrected early.

Everyone has the authority and responsibility to speak up when something is unsafe.

Summary

Unsafe acts and unsafe conditions are warning signs that an incident may occur. Learning to recognise these signs and taking immediate action helps prevent injuries and protects everyone on site. Do not walk past hazards. If you see something unsafe, say something and do something. Safety improves when everyone participates.

Discussion Points

1. What unsafe acts or conditions have you noticed recently on site?
2. Why do workers sometimes ignore unsafe conditions?
3. What should you do if someone reacts negatively when you raise a safety concern?

