

## Easy Recall with Mental Hooks



by Ir. Shum Keng Yan

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Let me start with a simple method to enable a quick recall of things learnt. Let's call it a safety mental hook. A mental hook helps to bring back memories of, or example, a training session or a key message.

Imagine a training session on the hazards of high pressure. You will have your deck of slides and undergo hands-on practical training as well as an examination. Pretty standard stuff.

After the session is completed, we may do a bit of follow up, perhaps through e-learning to check on progress or maybe offer a refresher course. In between it is really up to the employee and his ability to recall.

Let's work on an example, such as training a group on the hazards of gaseous pressure. How can you stress the message that pressure is dangerous? Create an over-pressure demonstration with an explosion? Show a video? Well, all such methods have been tried before. It is quite passive as the trainee just observes.

One of the best ways to learn and retain knowledge is to do it or experience it. Mental hooks can be created by using objects that can be seen daily.

Here is an example. During the training session, why not organise a simple competition such as getting the participants to blow balloons. The one with the largest balloon will win a prize. Initially everyone will blow fast and hard. As the balloon gets bigger, they will slow down due to lack of breath or something else.....

After the game, when you interview the participants, they will tell you that one of the reasons they slow down when blowing is that they are concerned that the balloon will explode due to over expansion.

This is where you can reinforce the message that overpressure is dangerous. So the next time the participant sees a balloon, he will recall the lesson has learnt.

Now think about it. Balloons are very common objects; you find them in shopping malls, at parties, in banks, markets and often at sales booths. You may even have them in your own premises. Thus the message is repeated each time a person sees a balloon. This beats having to conduct refresher classes again and again.

This is just one simple example. The point in having a mental hook during any training programme is to help us get the recall factor as well as regular reinforcement without us having to be there. But such mental hooks should be common daily items in order for them to be effective.

Warning: Mental hooks are no substitute for traditional technical safety training. This method reinforces and helps to recall key points from traditional technical safety trainings.... and helps make training a lot more fun too.

Can you think of other daily items that you can use as mental hooks? Share with me at: [pub@iem.org.my](mailto:pub@iem.org.my).

It is not about having more training. It is about how we keep the message in mind which makes a difference. ■

*The safest risk is the one that you did not take. Often it is the gap in the risk perception that leads to a gap in risk control.*