

Playing Around with Hazards

Identifying workplace hazards is no game, but training to recognize potential dangers could be. At least that's the idea behind a new online tool introduced by the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA).

The agency's Assistant Secretary David Michaels, Ph.D., M.P.H. announced the new tool at an [American Society of Safety Engineers](#) conference in Orlando, Fla. in June. Entitled the "Hazard Identification Training Tool," it's described as an interactive, game-based training tool for small business owners, workers and others interested in learning the core concepts of hazard identification. Of course, we had to try it out.

This Is Your Mission, Should You Choose To Accept It.

You are a supervisor working for the fictional general contractor "Four Twelve Construction," overseeing the building of a convenience store. Your goal is to make a profit and ensure that your workers remain safe from day to day. You have 30 days to maximize your profit while keeping your workforce safe.

This, by the way, is just the "Construction" scenario offered by the training. It's one of three that you can choose, the others being an "OSHA Visual Inspection" and a "Manufacturing" scenario that you can play as employer or employee of a metal parts factory. OSHA advises employers to consult their own safety guidelines as part of the process.

We spent an enjoyable 20 minutes clicking on equipment, people and areas to identify potential hazards. For example, a load improperly secured to the forklift resulted in a "falling object" hazard, ranked at Severity 2, Exposure 3. We had the option to keep the hazards in place or to fix them. The game gave us a budget for the fix, as well as the potential savings

should injury occur. It rewarded us for fixing hazards with a Worker Engagement Bonus. Workers started to find and report hazards to us. Our bottom line: we earned a net profit of \$71,925 but spent \$56,700 fixing 137 hazards.

A Word from OSHA

“Hazard identification is a critical part of creating an injury and illness prevention program that will keep workers safe and healthy on the job,” Dr. Michaels said. “This new tool not only educates employers about how to take control of their workplaces and protect workers, it also demonstrates that following well-established safety practices is also good for the bottom line.”

As attorneys who work to keep the workplace safe, we agree. This tool, like other training methods, helps raise awareness of the key components of the hazard-identification process:

- Information collection
- Workplace observation
- Incident investigation
- Employee participation, and
- Hazard prioritization

You can find the OSHA Hazard Identification Tool at <https://www.osha.gov/hazfinder/>. Share it with your workforce, and use it as a jumping off point in a safety discussion.