Be Aware of Safety paper 2026

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25 MARCH

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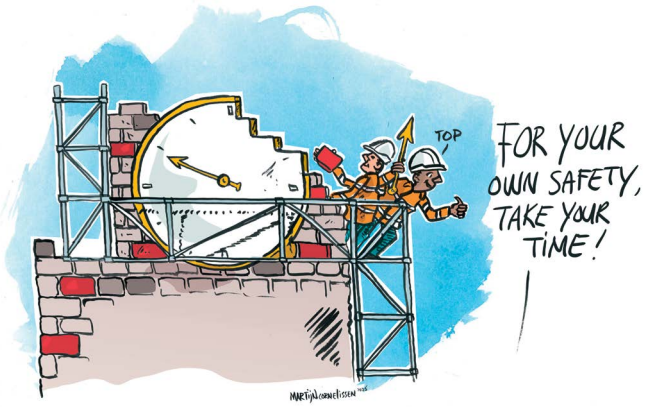
"Just real quick" is never safe enough

Routine renders you blind. A dangerous situation often arises because we do not scrutinise our own behaviour enough. Doing it "just real quick" on a stool or wobbly ladder an accident waiting to happen.

"That job has to be finished"
When we're "in the zone," we sometimes keep working unsafely, even though we know better. The following 'statements' may sound familiar:

- **"I've begun already.** I don't go all the way back to my van or the workshop to get the right tools."
- **"The job has to be finished.** Taking the right security measures takes too much time."
- **"Why make it complicated** if it can be done the easy way."
- **"My colleagues also do it that way.** If I don't do it, they think I'm making a fuss."

But by reasoning this way, you encourage unsafe behavior



Reflect on working safely
Dangerous behaviour often arises from a lack of conscious behaviour. To work safely, first pause to consider what it takes to do so. Before walking to the workplace, do the **Last Minute Risk Analysis (LMRA)**. Take a few minutes to ask yourself:

- What does my job look like and what do I need to work safely?
- Have all preparations been made to ensure safety?
- Did I bring all the tools and resources?
- Did I bring the right personal protective equipment?

Also report near-accidents
Reward safe behaviour and report things that almost went wrong. Such reports are very important to raise awareness and prevent actual accidents. And take lessons from them to see how things can be improved.

Safety is your responsibility
But your supervisor should also support you in this. Together, you decide how to work safely. Speak to your colleagues if they do something "just real quick" that is not safe. Offer help to do it safely.

Good preparation is half the work!
- Take a close look at the situation and surroundings.
- Get an insight into what is needed for your job.
- Check in advance what resources and how many people are needed.
- Make or delve into the project Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment.

Working safely is something you do together, even if you don't speak each other's language

In this paper, you will read how you and your colleagues can work safely. But what if someone struggles to follow these instructions because they do not speak the language (well)? To create a safe working environment together, we need to involve everyone!

In our industry, labour from other countries is badly needed. This affects everyone on the work site. If Dutch is not your first language, or your colleague does not speak the language (well), it can be difficult to communicate about safety.

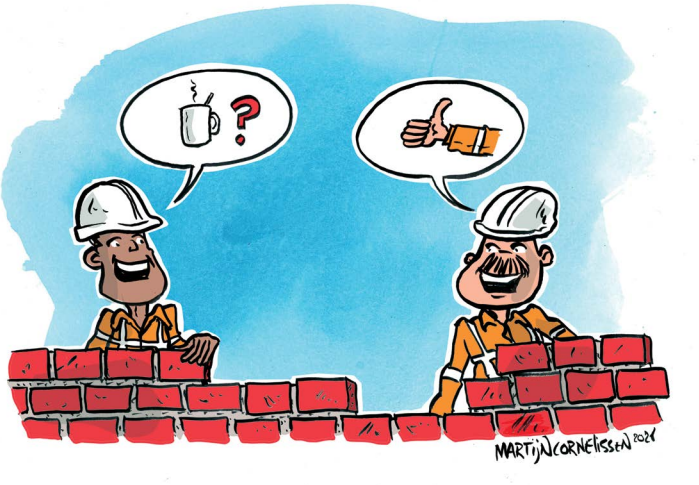
Tips in case of a language barrier

1. Involve non-native speakers in the work start-up. Let them contribute and ask them questions to check that everything is clear.
2. Use 'language' that is clear to everyone. With icons and gestures, you can communicate important things quickly.
3. Designate a buddy to support non-native speakers to whom they can turn when they have questions.
4. AI can be a useful tool for translations. But please note: don't use your phone in the workplace. This can be distracting and actually create unsafe situations.

Cultural differences

A language barrier is not the only obstacle in communication. Cultural differences can also lead to confusion.

- In some countries, people handle **hierarchy** at work differently. This can make it difficult to speak to a supervisor or an older colleague in the event of an unsafe situation.
- **Shame** can also play a role. Someone might not dare to ask questions when they do not understand a safety instruction.
- **Safety standards** here may differ from those in someone's home country.



To bridge these differences, we must want to understand each other. Engage in conversation, ask questions and offer help where needed. Show interest in someone's background. And make people feel they can ask questions themselves. That way, you find out why they act in a certain way and what they might be facing.

Involve everyone in working safely

You may find that it breaks your work flow when you need to ask questions or give additional explanations. But a safe workplace is only created when you involve everyone.

So take responsibility for your own and each other's safety.

An MEWP is not a cool toy

We use mobile elevating work platforms (MEWP) more and more for working at height. But using this equipment also carries risks. Therefore, step into the manbasket well prepared. Realise that every MEWP is different, don't take risks and follow the rules!

MEWPs have **many risks** and factors that affect them:

Risks	Influencing factors
Collisions	No cordoning off
Entrapment	Improper use
Falling hazard	Weather conditions
Tipping hazard	Uneven or muddy terrain

Sometimes, things still go wrong when working with MEWPs.

A When does it go wrong

1A. The MEWP on site reacts and moves differently from the MEWP with which the instruction was given.

2A. The MEWP is used for lifting or moving (construction) materials.

3A. The MEWP is used to let people step out at height.

4A. The MEWP is fitted with additional self-mounted structures, such as a hood against rain.

B What are the reasons

1B. There are many types of mobile elevating work platforms. They might look similar but each MEWP works differently. Do not take risks and follow the instructions of the specific MEWP.

2B. It is forbidden to use MEWPs as hoisting or lifting equipment.

3B. Stepping in/out of an MEWP at height is not allowed.

4B. You must not mount any structures to the manbasket.

Always start with a risk assessment and take appropriate measures in order to work safely.

- Study the instruction and/or manual first.
- The manufacturer's/rental company's instruction is always leading.
- Assess the site risks. Consider for example uneven or muddy terrain, protrusions to the building and so on.
- Cordon off the work area around and under the MEWP.
- Make sure someone on the ground can provide assistance.

Know what to do when hoisting and lifting

Hoisting and lifting are activities that require extra attention in the workplace. The rigger or slinger - the person attaching the load - has an important role. But so does the crane operator and everyone else in the workplace. Make sure everyone stays away from the crane or machine at all times. Do not stand or walk underneath a suspended load.

The person who 'slings' the load is responsible, together with the crane operator, for steering that load from A to B safely. And that goes beyond making sure the load is secure. Working from routine - 'I've been doing this for years' - is asking for accidents.

Good preparation is crucial
Hoisting or lifting always starts with a plan. Think carefully about:

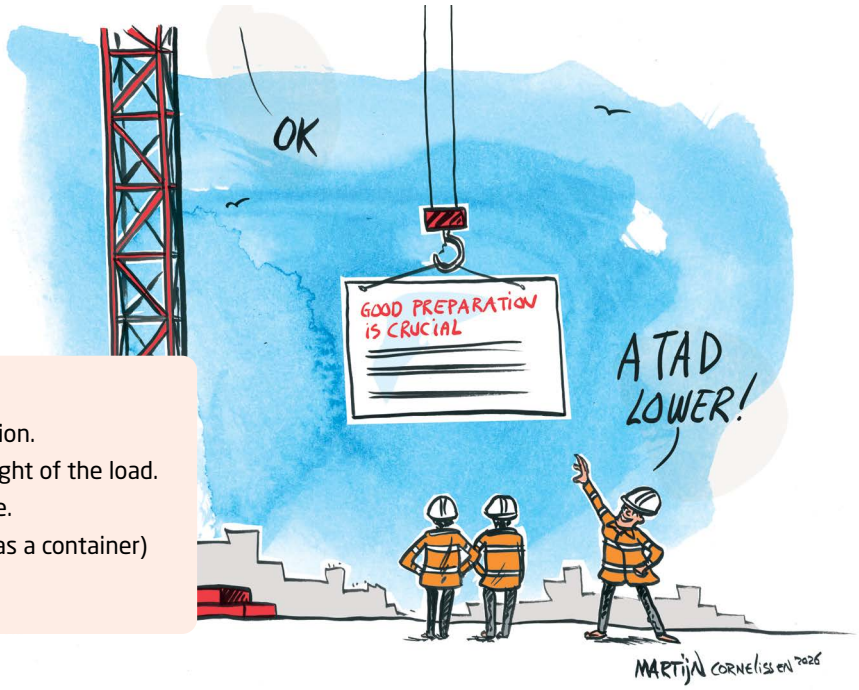
- The set-up
- The ground
- The lifting/hoisting equipment
- Cordoning off the area

Increasingly prefabricated
More and larger parts are delivered prefabricated or bundled. We also need to hoist or lift these prefabricated parts safely. While moving, these parts should never be able to become loose, e.g. by bumping or unexpected movements. Make sure the lifting or hoisting points are known in advance.

Demonstrable expertise
Working with a crane is subject to training requirements. Although the strict training requirements do not apply to an 'under 10 tonnes/metre' crane, this does not mean that anyone can and may work with it. Even for this 'smaller' crane, the operator must be competent and have an equivalent level of knowledge as a trained operator.

Lifting is not hoisting

- You must not hoist with a machine intended for lifting. There are tools for hire or available that allow you to use a machine for lifting also as a crane or mobile elevation work platform. In that case, you are obliged to have that combination inspected as a hoist or aerial work platform.
- Loading and unloading cargo is often done with a telehandler, forklift truck or truck-mounted forklift. This load must be well packed so that it cannot move and fall off the forks.
- Also for lifting, the operator must have a good view of their surroundings and the ground must be stable.



Never do this

- Slinging loads without information and instruction.
- Working without cordoning off the crane and flight of the load.
- Adding to a load already suspended in the crane.
- Stepping into or onto the load of a crane (such as a container) at height.

Danger from quartz dust:
Prevention is better than protection.

Drilling, sawing, milling. As soon as you start working with tools in specific types of stone, concrete or composite, quartz dust is released. Inhalation of quartz dust causes damage in your lungs.

The quartz content varies by type of stone but in all cases the cloud of quartz dust particles is extremely harmful. Also, it is the smallest, invisible dust particles that are the most dangerous. These enter deep into the lungs.

Quartz dust in the lungs leads to:
- respiratory tract irritation
- coughing
- tightness in the chest and shortness of breath
- in some cases lung cancer

Prevention before protection
To avoid the dangers of quartz dust, we should above all minimise drilling, sawing or milling in quartz-containing material.

If it is absolutely necessary to drill, saw or mill on site, at least take these measures.

1 **Prevention**
- Design structures and building materials in such a way that drilling, sawing and milling are not necessary.
- Choose low quartz materials as much as possible.
- Where possible, choose a processing method that releases as little quartz dust as possible (e.g. cutting blocks instead of sawing).

2 **Protection**
- Use tools with good extraction **(refer to stofvrijwerken.tno.nl)**
- Use water supply to prevent dust.
- Ensure ventilation; plenty of ventilation is very important if dust does get released.
- Proper dust caps and masks are a last resort to prevent inhalation, but are no substitute for the other measures!

Also use protection if you are only drilling a few holes or just sawing through something!

Talk about it and share experiences
Discuss the hazards and learn from each other which source measures work well. Sharing experiences is crucial.

More dialogue and openness ensures that we can better protect ourselves and each other.

Also take a look at the toolbox that is being compiled especially for Be Aware of Safety Day 2026.

Protect yourself from the sun: shade, shield, sunscreen

We all know that spending too much time in the sun is bad for you. But do you know exactly what risks you face and what you can do about them? People who work outdoors frequently are up to three times more likely to develop skin cancer. So, it is important to always take precautions.

1 Shade

We primarily seek shade to avoid the sun. How do you do this if you simply can't avoid working outside in the sun?

- Plan your work smartly. Start in the shade and move with the sun.
- Is there no shade at the workplace? Create your own shade, for example with a shading cover or a party tent.

Of course, pay attention to safety when doing so.

2 Shield

After taking as many shading measures as possible, you should also think about UV-protective clothing that shields you from the sun as best as possible.

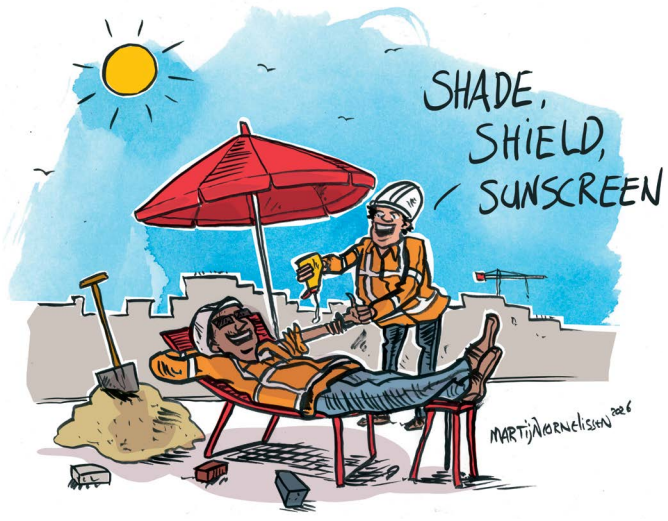
- Cover your arms and legs as much as possible, so preferably wear long trousers and long sleeves. Wear breathable clothing so you don't get too hot.
- Do not wear a white t-shirt. This colour offers less protection against UV radiation, especially when the shirt is wet.
- Your ears and neck are vulnerable spots when it comes to UV radiation. So, when protecting your head, wear not only a cap or helmet but also a neck flap.

UV light is a major cause of cataract and other eye conditions. So don't forget to protect your eyes and wear sunglasses.

3 Sunscreen

You must thoroughly apply sunscreen to the parts of your body that are not covered.

- Check the UV index forecast from the meteorological institute. From a UV index 3 onwards, it is important to apply sunscreen properly! Do this with at least SPF 30.
- Normally, you apply every 2 hours. If you sweat a lot during work, you need to do this more often!
- Many people apply too thin a layer. A thicker layer of sunscreen offers better protection.



Misconceptions

"I only need to apply sunscreen on very sunny days."

The risk of skin damage is lurking more often than you think. You must protect yourself well from UV index 3 onwards. Shade, shield, sunscreen therefore also applies on cloudy or cold summer days.

"As long as I don't burn, I'm not at risk."

When in the sun, you are always exposed to UV radiation. If you work outdoors a lot and do not take enough measures, this will cause serious problems in the long term. This happens faster if you burn, but exposure is harmful even without burning.

Do you see a suspicious spot on your body? Have your GP look at it quickly. By catching it in time, you can often prevent serious consequences.

The danger of exhaust fumes is all around us

Diesel exhaust, or diesel engine emissions, is a real silent killer. The emissions are not just bad for our lungs, they are actually carcinogenic. Exposure to diesel engine emissions should therefore be kept to a minimum. This sometimes requires radical measures.

In many operations, we encounter diesel engine emissions. Many vehicles and machines still have a diesel engine. Fortunately, these are a lot cleaner these days than they used to be, and where possible we electrify our machinery. **Yet the health risks are still there.**

- Construction equipment lasts a long time. Many employees still work with or next to older machines and vehicles that emit hazardous substances.
- Not only our own machines emit diesel engine emissions. For example, if you work next to the road you will definitely be exposed to exhaust fumes and other substances.

Also talk to your employer to keep the work situation as safe as possible.

- Request a toolbox on how to reduce the risks of diesel engine emissions.
- Do you see or experience an unsafe situation? If so, always make a report to your work supervisor.

Is external exposure very high?
Please indicate this to your work supervisor.
They will speak with the client about this. Closing a busy road is a hefty measure, but safety and health always come first.

! **Limit the risk**
Ideally, you want to create an environment where there are no emissions from diesel engines. But exposure cannot always be prevented. For example, when working next to a motorway or when aggregates are necessary on a construction site. That's why it's important to limit this risk as much as possible.

What can you do?
- Ask about options for cleaner equipment.
- Always switch off a diesel engine when it is not or no longer needed.
- While working, keep as much distance as possible from diesel vehicles and machines.
- Vehicle running on diesel? Take a close look at your driving style; accelerate and drive off calmly.

Stay sharp about cutting hazards!

A cut is among the most common injuries in our industry. Cut tendons and nerves or nasty infections are more common than you might think.

The danger lies in the way we handle sharp tools. The many daily operations with knives, grinders, saws and other power tools make us lose focus on the risks. We are also so used to handling glass, sharp panels or tiles that we almost don't think about this anymore.

Being mindful of sharp tools and sharp materials is crucial

1 **Step 1 | Awareness**

If you are going to work with sharp tools or sharp materials, ask yourself every time how to do it in the safest way possible. Ask questions, read the manuals and protect yourself appropriately.

2 **Step 2 | Training & instruction**

Proper training helps to handle sharp tools and materials carefully. There are many toolboxes available. So ask your supervisor if you can take such a toolbox. Also, manufacturers often provide instructions on their products.

3 **Step 3 | Safe tools**

What is the safest tool for your job? Consider for example low-speed grinders, special safety blades or saws with kickback protection. Specific tools, such as a façade clamp when lifting smooth surfaces, can also make your work safer.

4 **Stap 4 | Safe workplace**

In many situations, place and location determine the risk. Avoid ad hoc work with sharp tools as much as possible. Always check first whether you can do this work prefabricated or in controlled conditions.

5 **Step 5 | Planning & organisation**

Plan your work carefully. Unexpected and unplanned work with sharp materials and tools leads to the greatest risks. Keep the workplace tidy, work neatly and adhere to agreed working methods.

6 **Step 6 | Personal protective equipment**

Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). These often include at least the right cut-resistant safety gloves and, for some jobs, forearm protectors as well.

Physical strain is part of the job, but know your limits

Physical strain is part of our work. That's not a problem, but of course you should avoid excessive strain. How do you do that? And what do we actually mean by physical strain?

Physical strain is often associated with heavy manual work. Lifting, pushing and pulling might come to mind. But certain working postures also put strain on your body. Consider for instance working above shoulder height or, rather, working on your knees. Doing the same heavy work for a long time without a break, or adopting a poor working posture, is also bad for you. In addition, the working environment plays a part. Working on uneven ground or in a very cold or very hot environment affects your body.

Physical capacity
Physical strain is not necessarily bad, but too much strain is. Your physical capacity also plays a role here. Factors such as fatigue, stress and age partly determine how much workload you can handle.

Occupational hygiene strategy
Are you already familiar with the occupational hygiene strategy? This means the order in which you take certain measures to work safely. Also use it to reduce physical strain.

1 **Measures at the source**
Can you eliminate the physically demanding work altogether?

For example by:
- Using prefabrication
- Using lighter materials
- Delivering heavy materials at height in advance, so you don't have to move them yourself
- Using machines to carry out the work, such as paving machines or demolition robots

2 **Technical and organisational measures**
Are there tools or working methods to make my work less physically demanding?

For example, can we...
- Use lifting tools
- Adjust the working height
- Rotate tasks with colleagues, so you don't do the same (heavy) work for long periods in a row

3 **Individual measures**
Individual measures are measures that protect you personally. Exoskeletons are an example.

4 **PPE**
Only after you have gone through steps 1, 2 and 3 does PPE come into play.

Consider for example:
- Sturdy footwear with well-treaded soles
- Knee protection

Don't be afraid to use tools
Fortunately, there are various tools and working methods to reduce your physical strain. They are intended to help everyone work more safely & healthily. So don't assume you can manage without them – use the tools that are available!

Engage in conversation
Working safely and responsibly starts with good job planning and preparation. For some of the measures mentioned, you depend on your employer or client. But it is also up to you to make sure your physical strain does not become too much.

Do you think additional measures are needed for your work? Talk to your supervisor about the options.

Also take a look at the toolbox that is being compiled especially for Be Aware of Safety Day 2026.

Everyone must be able and dare to speak out

Social and psychological safety. You may hear these terms thrown around. But what exactly do we mean by it? And how do you prevent your workplace from becoming socially unsafe?

Social safety means protection against threats from others within a social environment. In this case, your working environment. Examples of such threats include bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, aggression and violence.

Psychological safety means a positive climate within an organisation or a team. Does everyone feel free to speak out without fear of consequences? After all, that is what it takes to do better together.

So they are two different things, but they are related.

Social and psychological safety in your team
Ask yourself if you recognise any of these situations.

1. You see or experience an unsafe situation. You hesitate whether you should say anything about it, because you are afraid people will think you are being dramatic or difficult.
2. Someone speaks to you about an unsafe situation. You think: 'Mind you own business' or 'I know what I'm doing, really'.

Does this sound familiar? Then maybe, the positive climate in your team is not yet as you would like it to be. Unintentionally, this also increases the risk of social unsafety. Everyone on the team must be able and dare to speak up. It is therefore important to switch off your initial judgement and engage in conversation.

Stop, Think, Act
In doing so, use the Stop-Think-Act method.

Stop: Don't react immediately, don't voice your initial judgement. Just count to 10 first.

Think: Consider what consequences this judgement would have. Maybe it prevents people from daring to speak out. This, in turn, can lead to social unsafety. Instead, think about what questions you can ask the other person to positively resolve the situation.

Act: Ask your questions and engage in the conversation.

How do you best resolve the situations mentioned?

1. Are you afraid of the consequences if you speak out about an unsafe situation? Engage in conversation with your supervisor. Discuss together how to deal with this as a team.
2. Do you disagree with someone who addresses you? Then: Stop, Think, Act.

Want to know more? If so, check the **'Social and psychological safety'** toolbox!