What does 'common sense' really mean in health and safety?


Abstract

Extensive literature search has revealed that construction workers refer to the use of 'common sense' in site safety. This was also discovered in a recently completed PhD project where workers openly discussed a common sense approach to health and safety on site. The use of this term can be problematic. Different workers labelled different behaviours under this generic term. Also, some used it to refer to positive experiences and application of knowledge based on experience. Others employed the term negatively, or dismissively: "It's just common sense..." general use of the term puts emphasis on 'basic knowledge' required for attaining minimal or satisfactory achievement of a given task or activity. This is in conflict with some workers' interpretation of skilled and experience based action. In academic language ideas in this field are more substantially and in depth explored under 'communities of practice' and 'local knowledge'. These concepts offer an avenue for analysis not tied to specific wording employed by respondents but interpreting broader sets of data particularly for this study (i.e. observation material and text around specific extracts of text). This paper presents findings from five micro construction firms regarding the concept of common sense and site safety. Practical constraints, such as a researcher's stage of development and skill in qualitative analysis, potentially hinder the development of argumentation. The interpretative school of thought accepts researchers' influence on the processes; and we add depth and nuanced understanding to this discussion via practical examples of such issues. Interpretation of the data collected through ethnographic case studies indicates although workers interpret common sense differently, although it is essentially a means of working safely. However, common sense safety techniques tend to fall outside strict site rules which are often bureaucratic.
Dupe Domeih explores what is meant by “safety culture” and the impact managers can have on the workforce. Health and safety management, like all management functions, involves active leadership from the top. Visible evidence that investment is made in health and safety including providing adequate resources, training, etc. Good knowledge and understanding of health and safety throughout the organisation. Clear definition of the culture that is desired and what is required of everyone to achieve it. Managers should note that it does takes some time to develop a good health and safety culture and it can be lost easily and in a shorter time than it took to achieve it. Health and safety cultures continually evolve and continuous effort is required to ensure that changes are positive. Common sense definition: Your common sense is your natural ability to make good judgments and to behave in a | Meaning, pronunciation, translations and examples. common sense in American. ordinary good sense or sound practical judgment. Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 4th Edition. Copyright © 2010 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved. Derived forms. common-sense (ˈcomˌmən-sən-ˌsē). This was also discovered in a recently completed PhD project where workers openly discussed a common sense approach to health and safety on site. The use of this term can be problematic. Different workers labelled different behaviours under this generic term. Also, some used it to refer to positive experiences and application of knowledge based on experience. Interpretation of the data collected through ethnographic case studies indicates although workers interpret common sense differently, although it is essentially a means of working safely. However, common sense safety techniques tend to fall outside strict site rules which are often bureaucratic. Item Type: Chapter in book.