

Job Site TIPS

TR January '09 TIP-of-the-Month

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I've seen so many installation crews waste so much time on the job over the years, that I thought it would be helpful to compile a list of time and frustration elimination suggestions for this month's TIP. Since I'm so disorganized, I've made most of these mistakes myself, even the safety related ones, so I speak from some experience. Hopefully you can pick up a few tips and save yourself some grief.

Job Safety Tips

The most important tips I can pass along about the job site concerns safety. The job site is definitely dangerous and almost everyone I know, me included, has had some injury while working on the job, especially during the prewire construction phase. I have had a co-worker seriously injured and many of my friends in the industry have related stories of serious accidents, including deaths. It's a common problem and I hate to say I don't see much being done about it.

So my number one TIP: **BE PREPARED.**

Before you or your crew leaves for the job, make sure everyone knows what they're going to do if someone gets hurt. I classify injuries in three categories based on the action required. You need a plan for each one.

- **Minor** that can be treated from a first aid kit.
- **Serious** that require taking the injured to a doctor or emergency room; and
- **Major** (life threatening) that require a fast call to 911 and as much first aid as possible.

To be prepared for each of these I highly recommend you do the following.

1. **Have a PLAN.** What are you or your crew going to do when there is an accident? Stand around and wonder who should do what? Negative. Write it down, talk it over.

Decide what action to take, based on the seriousness of the injury, and do it. Make sure there is a designated driver and backup.

2. Make sure there is a well stocked (and restocked) first aid kit on the truck and everyone knows where it is and how to use it.

3. Make sure there is a working cell phone on the job to call 911.

4. Make sure everyone knows where the nearest medical facility is located from the job and who is going to drive there. If you decide the injury is best handled by a quick trip to the emergency room, know where the hell it is! This is especially true when working out in the "boonies". BUT, if there is any doubt about the seriousness of the injury ESPECIALLY if the injured can't talk, CALL 911. I am not a doctor and don't claim to offer professional medical advice, but from my experience, if the person has suffered a back, neck, or head injury, can not talk, or is unconscious, call 911 immediately.

5. If possible, have each crew member take a CPR/first aid course. It could easily save someone's life.

6. Make sure everyone is trained on how to prevent injuries in the first place! Wear hard hats, wear protective shoes, wear eye protection, etc. I know darn well most of you don't. Cost of the above equipment: \$50. Cost of an eye operation: \$23,000. You get the point.

7. In summer months, make sure there is adequate water on the truck and remind everyone to drink it (not coffee or soda which contains caffeine and dehydrates)!

Job Time Savers

All of the following TIPS and recommendations require one big ingredient that HAS to be instilled in all employees: discipline. This has to be a company priority or none of this stuff is going to work. The good news is that once discipline is established is it very easy to maintain it. It just becomes part of the day. Discipline is learned by example. It has to come from the top and time must be spent explaining how important it is and how everyone's job depends on it. The other good news: it definitely adds to the bottom line AND professionalism of the company, no question.

Before Truck-roll



1. As a general rule, anything you can do at the shop, rather than the site, should be done at the shop. This include premaking cables, prelabeling, preassembling racks or enclosures, calibrating, assigning presets, etc. Everything, no matter what, always takes longer on the job site.

2. Double check that everyone on the crew, before going to the job, knows exactly what is to be done. It is way more distracting to do this at the job.

3. Make two **checklists**. One kept on the truck for the standard equipment and tools that should be on the truck.

This should include at least the following:

- First aid kit
- Replacement batteries
- Batter charger
- Ladders
- Safety equipment: hardhats, eye protection, gloves, etc.
- Expendable: staples, screws, tie-wraps, labels, connectors, hooks, etc.
- Drills, bits
- Extension cords

The other is what's needed for the specific job. This includes the specific equipment to be installed, cable, rough-in equipment,

How to use a checklist

Having been a pilot for many years and relying on checklists to save my life, I quickly learned there is an art to using one. To use a checklist properly requires that the person using it pretend they're brain dead (which probably isn't far from the truth). Each item must be read out loud with no preconception about the item, and actually checked to see if the item is there/on/loaded/etc. It is always better to use two people, one to read the item aloud, the other to check it is there.

4. Make sure at least someone in the crew knows the right house!
5. Double check the equipment schedule (list of what is to be installed on the job) agrees with what's on the truck
6. Check how much cable is actually on the wire spools against what will be needed on the job (from the cable schedule). This can be done by using the length markers on the cable or using a cable tester that has a built in TDR (cable length testing option).
7. Make sure someone has a working (and charged) cell phone, turned on and the office knows the number.
8. Ask questions! Don't assume someone else on the job knows what's going on!

On the Job

1. The first thing to do on a new job is to establish a "beach head", an old military term for a place that is defensible from the enemy that can be used to safely unload supplies and equipment. This is your staging area, out of the traffic, other trades, and is "defensible" from "the enemy". Pick this location carefully. In a multistory house, there should be one on each floor. This is where you keep your tools, equipment to be installed, cleaning equipment and supplies.
2. When you're done with a tool, return it to the staging area. This includes drills, extension cords, cable spools, ladders, etc. Again, this takes discipline.
3. Check off the documentation as you go. Note any "as built" changes as they are done. Everyone will forget them at the end of the day when you're in a hurry to get home. For example, check off each item on the cable schedule as it is installed. That way, if you do get pulled off the job, you or someone will be able to figure out what was completed and where to pick up the work.

BTW, one of the most inefficient things you can do is pull a crew off one job, in the middle of the job, to "put out a fire" on another job. This is almost always the result of poor planning. I know job scheduling is difficult, but when you have to move a crew it means that where they left off will be poorly documented and major time will be lost restarting the job, mistakes will be made, and the builder will wonder what the heck is going on.

Before Leaving

1. Make a “leave the job” checklist. This is probably the “before truck-roll” checklist in reverse. This will eliminate the “I thought you put it on the truck” problem and prevent tools and equipment from being left at the site.
2. Make sure the documentation is checked off and any “as built” changes are documented. Make sure the crew does this as a team effort—one person reads off the changes or items completed and the other person verifies it was done.

Back at the Shop

1. Make sure you/crew return the truck to the shop with adequate gas for the next day.
2. At the shop, make sure the truck is cleaned up. Remove all the food wrappers, coffee cups, crap, and make sure everything is back in its place in the truck. Sloppiness is the first “crack” in discipline.
3. Never leave documentation on the truck even if you think you/your crew are going right back on the job the next day. If you’re wrong, it will waste a lot of time. Make sure it’s back where it belongs in the office and someone knows what work was completed.

I’m sure I can add a bunch more but that’s enough for this TIP. I’m sure you have many more to add. If you have a great tip, send me an email and I’ll publish an “addendum” to this TIP with everyone’s ideas.



If you have any questions about anything in this TIP or job site practices in general, drop me an e-mail at grayson@trainingdept.com I will actually answer it!

NEXT MONTH

TIPs on thermal troubleshooting.

Catch you next month....Grayson

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