

# Need a Nudge?



SAFETY NUDGES TO EMPOWER THE USE OF  
PPE IN HIGH-RISK WORKPLACES

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# Safety Nudges to empower the use of PPE in high-risk workplaces

## Safer workplaces through Nudging

From construction, manufacturing and mining sites, workplace injuries often stem not from a lack of knowledge or training, but from the small, everyday habits we fall into. Workers know they should wear PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), lift properly, or take breaks to refuel on water and food—but in the rush of the day, those good intentions often get overlooked. That's where nudging comes in.

A nudge is a subtle change in the design of surroundings that makes the safer choice the easier choice. Think of a reminder at the exact moment PPE is needed, or a visual cue that encourages workers to shift position before fatigue sets in. Instead of relying solely on training sessions or written rules—which are easy to forget—nudges meet people where they are, in real time, at the construction-, manufacturing- or mining site.

## Why nudges matter in safety

Our research shows that most of our decisions at the workplace are guided by habit and instinct, not careful planning. When focus is stretched thin, risks go unnoticed. Nudges cut through that noise by working with human behavior and instincts, not against it. They align with our natural, habit-driven way of thinking—helping workers take safer actions without having to stop and think about every step.

## What Makes a Safety Nudge Effective

Through years of conducting behavior change pilot projects, we have found that the best nudges share three key traits:

- Contextual – They show up exactly when and where they're needed, like a reminder at a ladder base or near a noisy machine.
- Intuitive – They're simple and natural, so workers don't need extra effort to follow them.
- Feedback-oriented – They make invisible risks visible, for example, by activating a flashing red light when a worker is in a dangerous situation.

## Beyond equipment: Designing for behavior change

PPE alone isn't enough—hard hats don't help if they stay on the shelf. The difference comes from environments designed to encourage safe behavior on a daily basis. Nudges do just that, embedding safety into the everyday flow of work.

## The bottom line

Nudging isn't about changing who people are. It's about shaping workplaces habits and cultures so that safe choices feel natural, easy, and automatic. Backed by years of field testing and behavioral science, our approach consist of practical, proven tools to prevent injuries and promote safer workplaces.



# The site-entrance nudge

Remind everyone entering the site to wear the correct PPE.

## The Nudge Solution

At worksite entry and reentry points, clear, consistent signage can act as a silent guide that makes the rules obvious without needing long explanations. By using simple icons for helmets, gloves, glasses, vests, and boots, workers instantly know what's required.

This approach works because we remember images faster and longer than words. Instead of relying on thick safety manuals or text-heavy instructions, visual guides communicate in seconds. The Site entrance nudge turns every entry point into a visual checkpoint.

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## ✔ Do:

- Use large, consistent signage at all entrances and reentry points
- Make icons simple, recognizable, and easy to interpret
- Pair visuals with checkmarks to signal compliance clearly

## ✘ Don't:

- Depend only on manuals or text-heavy rules
- Use inconsistent or text based sign designs
- Place signs where they are easily overlooked



# The sign-in nudge

Remind workers to select and wear the appropriate PPE before they even start the workday.

## The Nudge Solution

Daily sign-in is a fixed routine for most workers in high-risk workplaces – which makes it an ideal point for a timely safety reminder.

Clear visuals of helmets, gloves, masks, or glasses integrated into the sign-in process make the correct choice obvious and remove guesswork. Instead of relying on supervisors to correct mistakes later, the sign-in itself becomes a safety gate – reinforcing safe habits before workers step onto the site. The PPE sign-in nudge turns an existing routine into a consistent, low-effort way to build prevention into the start of every shift.

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## ✔ Do:

- Use simple, visual reminders linked to specific tasks
- Place visual PPE guides as part of the sign-in procedure
- Keep prompts short, clear, and actionable

## ✘ Don't:

- Depend on supervisors to correct mistakes after they happen
- Overload workers with text-heavy instructions
- Hide reminders in places where they can be skipped or ignored



# The workbag nudge

Minimize the risk of workers packing or using the wrong PPE.

## The Nudge Solution

When workers prepare for the day, grabbing tools and gear is second nature. This moment is also a key decision moment: the wrong tools — or missing PPE — can easily end up in the workbag.

Printed reminders on the workbag itself — for example an image of a helmet, glasses and workgloves and the message “Do you have the right PPE?” — make workers pause before stepping onto the site. Instead of leaving safety up to memory or habit, the PPE workbag nudge builds protection into the everyday touch-points. The bag itself becomes a constant, visual prompt that prevents errors before they happen.

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## ✔ Do:

- Build PPE storage directly into workbags
- Use guiding, visuals on the bag itself
- Provide multiple versions to match the different tasks of different workers

## ✘ Don't:

- Rely on workers to remember PPE without cues
- Provide workbags where PPE end up in mess at the bottom
- Use reminders that wear off quickly or become invisible



# The workstation protection nudge

Guide workers to safe positioning and minimize injury risks in confined workspaces.

## The Nudge Solution

In cramped areas such as garbage chutes or other tight workstations, small mistakes in positioning can quickly lead to injuries. By adding tactile and colored footprints directly on the floor, workers receive immediate guidance on where to stand and how to orient themselves.

In addition, colored padding placed around sharp or hazardous edges provides both visual warnings and physical protection. Instead of relying solely on training or memory, the environment itself supports workers in staying safe.

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## ✔ Do:

- Use colored footprints to show correct positioning
- Place visual cues where movement is constrained
- Add protective padding to sharp or exposed edges

## ✘ Don't:

- Assume workers will always remember proper stance in tight spaces
- Use text based signs to tell workers how to stay safe
- Leave hazardous edges unmarked or unprotected



# The workstation reminder nudge

Improve PPE selection through simplified visual guidance.

## The Nudge Solution

At high-risk workplaces, PPE wears out quickly. Without reminders to inspect and replace damaged gear, workers may continue using broken PPE—or remove it entirely—risking injury.

Since PPE vending machines can seem distant or hard to find in fast-paced environments, we recommend adding visual overviews of required PPE at each workstation and clear wayfinding signs to the nearest vending machine — keeping workers protected throughout the workday.

### ✔ Do:

- Use posters with clear overviews of the workstation specific required PPE
- Give visual directions to the nearest PPE station or vending machine
- Keep the signs simple, intuitive and consistent in the design

### ✘ Don't:

- Overcomplicate guidance with too many categories or text
- Rely only on the memory of workers to remember to replace broken PPE
- Place instructions away from the point of decision



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