

# THE POWER OF VISUAL LEARNING

## Harnessing Video to Improve Training & Compliance

By Matthew Pierce

**Training is the backbone of every EHS program, but ensuring that employees retain what they learn is another matter. Safety leaders have long relied on manuals, slide decks and lengthy in-person sessions to teach workers how to stay safe. But too often, these traditional methods fail to capture attention or promote retention.**

**Comprehension simply** is not optional when it comes to safety. This is why video is a powerful tool for EHS training. Video helps safety professionals communicate complex procedures clearly, consistently and memorably to ensure that every worker receives the same message in the same way.

People want to learn visually. TechSmith (2024) found that nearly 83% of people prefer to consume instructional or informational content through video. For safety leaders, that preference presents both an opportunity and a responsibility—to deliver training that meets compliance requirements and truly connects with workers.

### USING VIDEO IN EHS TRAINING

**•Prioritize visual demonstrations.**

Replace or supplement text-heavy training with short videos that clearly show correct safety procedures, especially for complex tasks such as PPE use or equipment operation.

**•Keep videos short and focused.**

Limit clips to no longer than 5 minutes to improve attention, reduce cognitive overload and fit training into daily workflows.

**•Leverage simple, low-cost production.** Use smartphones and basic editing tools to quickly create clear, repeatable training content.

**•Address real safety gaps first.**

Work with supervisors and frontline employees to identify common mistakes, then create targeted video explainers to correct those specific issues.

**•Make training accessible and repeatable.** Host videos on mobile-friendly platforms so workers can replay content anytime for reinforcement and just-in-time learning.

**•Reinforce learning over time.** Use microlearning, refreshers and spaced repetition (e.g., periodic short clips) to combat knowledge decay and keep safety practices top of mind.

### EHS Training Demands a Different Approach

Occupational safety mistakes can lead to serious injuries, costly fines or even fatalities. When training fails to stick, organizations risk more than just inefficiency—they risk lives.

Safety content also poses unique challenges. Procedures such as lockout/tagout, confined space entry or appropriate PPE use are often best demonstrated visually. Written descriptions do not always convey the nuances of proper techniques or the dangers of incorrect execution. This is where video excels.

EHS leaders use video to show rather than tell, translating complex instructions into clear, visual stories that make proper techniques easier to understand and remember. By delivering the same training experience to every employee, regardless of their shift, location or language, video helps ensure consistency and creates a recordable, repeatable asset that supports compliance and can be audited and verified.

As the workforce becomes more diverse, employees arrive with different levels of literacy, technical knowledge and familiarity with digital tools. Video bridges those gaps, serving as a universal tool that transcends language barriers and can be subtitled, captioned or translated to make learning accessible to everyone.

### Overcoming Technological Barriers

One of the biggest misconceptions about creating video is that it is complicated or expensive to produce. In fact, artificial intelligence (AI) has effectively democratized video creation to the untrained consumer. With only a smartphone and basic software tools, anyone can record, edit and share high-quality video content.

For EHS teams, the goal is not high production value but training that is clear and repeatable. This might mean filming a supervisor demonstrating how to safely operate a powered industrial truck or recording a short clip showing the proper way to store hazardous materials.

AI also offers new possibilities for standardized training with universal EHS topics such as ladder safety. It can help generate or edit instructional videos that demonstrate these basic principles consistently across the organization while automatically improving lighting, removing background noise and creating captions or translating them into different languages.

Peer-to-peer learning through video is another great way to add authenticity to training materials that does not require complicated production techniques. All that is required is encouraging frontline employees to record “day-in-the-life” safety tips or short video clips of their own best practices. When people see their coworkers modeling safe behavior, it reinforces a culture of accountability.

### Comprehension & Retention

Research in educational psychology supports what most intuitively know: people learn better when they both see and hear information. This concept, known as dual coding theory, explains why learners who watch a demonstration and hear narration retain information more effectively than those who only read about it.

This principle is highly relevant for safety training. Watching someone demonstrate how to properly operate an eyewash station or safely work in a wet environment engages multiple senses and helps workers visualize the correct behavior.

Video is also far more accessible compared to other mediums. Workers can replay clips as needed until they fully grasp the procedure, which is not possible with in-person sessions or slide deck presentations. Videos can be made available on a company intranet, learning management system or mobile app, giving workers on-demand access whenever they need a refresher. Most importantly, clear visual guidance reduces misunderstandings and errors in high-risk environments, helping to prevent incidents before they occur.

Length is also a key factor. Short, focused clips, ideally under 5 minutes, are especially effective. They prevent cognitive overload and make it easier to fit training into the daily workflow. When safety knowledge is visual, accessible and easy to revisit, comprehension improves. This can translate directly into fewer incidents and a stronger overall safety culture.

## Practical Tips for Integrating Video into EHS Training

EHS leaders should not feel the need to rebuild their entire training program overnight. Even small, strategic steps can make a big difference. Begin by working with what is already available. Enhance existing materials by adding short video demonstrations to e-learning modules or embedding clips in slide decks. For example, a brief video showing the correct way to lift a heavy object can bring a static lesson to life and make the content more memorable.

It is important to start by addressing common safety challenges. Engage with supervisors and frontline employees to identify recurring issues or areas where procedures are often misunderstood, then create short videos that clarify the correct approach. Blending formats can further improve understanding. Combining live demonstrations with screen recordings or simple animations allows learners to see both the real-world application and the underlying process. One example could be pairing a machinery lockout demonstration with an animation that explains the internal mechanism.

Once again, accessibility is key. Make sure videos are easy to find and view on any device, including mobile, since many workers access training in the field. Invite employee feedback about what does and does not work and additional topics they would like to see covered. This input can help build a dynamic video library that evolves alongside the organization's needs. Think of video as an ongoing tool rather than a one-time resource. Short refreshers, seasonal updates or microlearning clips can reinforce safety lessons and keep important practices top of mind throughout the year.

The most successful video training programs treat video as part of a continuous conversation about safety, supporting both learning and compliance in a practical, engaging way. Instead



of relying on a single training session to change behavior, forward-thinking EHS leaders recognize the importance of spacing out content over time. Repurposed video clips, short reminders and microlearning modules serve as ongoing touchpoints that reinforce key messages. This approach aligns with the principles of spaced repetition, which research shows is essential to counter the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve—the tendency for people to quickly lose information if it is not revisited. By delivering small, timely doses of content, organizations can keep safety practices top of mind, reduce knowledge decay and create a culture where safe behaviors are consistently reinforced rather than treated as one-time lessons.

## Video Editing Techniques to Reinforce Safety Culture & Compliance

The real impact of safety training emerges during editing. Simple editing techniques are often the best. Use annotations such as arrows, callouts or slow-motion replays to highlight key moments or draw attention to critical steps such as inspecting a gas line for leaks or properly securing a harness. People tend to remember stories over facts. Using these annotations pairs well with scenario-based videos that simulate real-world incidents or near misses to help learners understand the consequences of unsafe actions and the benefits of following proper procedures. Adding interactivity, such as quizzes, checkpoints or reflection questions, further encourages active engagement and reinforces retention.

Consistent branding through standardized introductions, outros and visual elements is important for

communicating that videos are part of a broader organizational safety initiative, building trust and a sense of shared purpose. In EHS, indexing content is a critical component of the editing process as well. Organizing content for auditability by maintaining a structured video library with clear metadata, including titles, dates and subjects, makes it easy for compliance auditors to confirm training coverage and demonstrates that

education is delivered uniformly across sites and shifts.

When these practices are applied thoughtfully, safety videos not only educate effectively but reflect the organization's ongoing commitment to safety excellence.

Video is a practical tool that helps EHS leaders turn mandatory training into meaningful learning. It allows safety teams to clearly show procedures, reinforce key messages and ensure that critical information reaches everyone. With today's easy-to-use and AI-assisted tools, anyone can create short, effective training clips that support a culture of clear, consistent communication. Safety is ultimately about protecting people, and video training helps make that understanding real and accessible for everyone. **PSJ**

## References

TechSmith. (2024). Video viewer trends report. [www.techsmith.com/resources/research/video-viewer-report/pdf](http://www.techsmith.com/resources/research/video-viewer-report/pdf)

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