Tips for Preparing Visual Aids

Adapted from U.S. Department of Labor
OSHA Office of Training and Education

Adding the Visual Dimension

Visuals add an important dimension to a presentation, and you, the speaker, must capitalize on this dimension. It is critical that you prepare visual aids that reinforce your major points, stimulate your audience, and work well in the physical setting of your presentation. If visual aids are poorly selected or inadequately done, they will distract from what you are saying.

- **Each element** of an audio-visual product - a single slide or a page of a flip chart presentation, for example, **must be simple** and contain only one message. Placing more than one message on a single image confuses the audience and diminishes the potential impact of visual media. Keep visual aids BRIEF.

- Determine the **difference between what you will say and what the visual aid will show**. Do not read straight from your visuals.

- **Ask the audience to read or listen, not both**; visual aids should not provide reading material while you talk. Rather, use them to illustrate or highlight your points.

- **Give participants paper copies** of various graphic aids used in your presentation. They will be able to write on the paper copies and have them for future reference.

- **Account for production time** in your planning and selection process. Slides must be developed, videotape edited - you do not want to back yourself against a wall because the visuals are not ready. You can often get production work done in 24-48 hours, but it is much more expensive than work that is done on an extended schedule.

- Use **charts** and **graphs** to support the presentation of numerical information.

- **Develop sketches** and **drawings** to convey various designs and plans.

- When preparing graphics, **make sure they are not too crowded in detail**. Do no over-use color. See that line detail, letters, and symbols are bold enough to be seen from the back of the room.

- **Do not use visual aids for persuasive statements**, qualifying remarks, emotional appeals, or any type of rhetorical statement.

- **If you have handouts, don't let them become a distraction** during the presentation. They should provide reinforcement following your address. Consider giving them out after the presentation, unless the audience will use them during the presentation or will need to review them in advance of the presentation.

- **Practice presenting the full program** using graphic materials so you are familiar with their use and order.

- **Seek feedback on the clarity of your visuals** and do so early enough to allow yourself time to make needed adjustments.