



# There's Safety in Words

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**Whether in the public sector or private sector, engineers and environmental safety and health (ESH) professionals can often get wrapped up in meeting their own objectives and shift their focus away from the intended target: the end users. As an engineer working with aerospace mechanics, it can be easy to forget that I'm not the one who will be using the equipment I design when I'm busy checking every box on my design requirements list.**

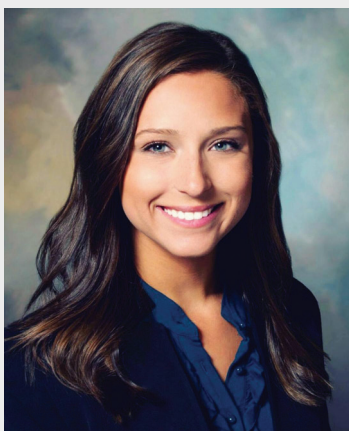
It doesn't matter if I checked the daily parts per million (PPM) limits if the mechanics are still nauseated by the odor of a chemical, and it doesn't matter if their repetitive motions are technically considered "moderate" if the mechanics are still having wrist injuries. On the other hand, sometimes managers and ESH professionals with only tangential involvement in a project can tend to fixate on irrelevant non-issues or invent problems that aren't there. Luckily, there is an easy solution – ask the end users!

There are endless options for making sure that everyone's opinion is heard. Who better to determine what is and isn't ergonomic than the mechanic who will actually be using the tool every day? Too often labeled as a complaint, employee feedback should actually be considered pure gold by ESH professionals. Suggestions can be gathered through anonymous collection boxes, formal feedback surveys, or casual meetings. Why not take five minutes to hold a morning stretch/warm up session and open up the floor to discuss outstanding safety concerns? Not only will you gain valuable information, but you'll increase employee buy-in and eliminate the tense us-vs-them dynamic that is so often prevalent when introducing new requirements



or technology into the workplace. We can shift ESH initiatives from being something we impose on workers, to something that was their own idea in the first place.

Of course, workplace safety and health requirements exist for a reason and they unmistakably must be followed. But let's not forget that the primary reason for these standards is to keep our workers comfortable, healthy, and safe, so let's start by asking them how we can achieve those goals together.



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*Caroline Mitchell is an Applications Engineer in Manufacturing Technology at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics. She researches, develops, and integrates innovative technologies to improve the productivity, quality, and safety of aircraft assembly. Currently, Caroline's main focus is developing advanced surface preparation techniques for both composite and metal adhesion. She also has extensive experience with 3D modeling/design and additive manufacturing for urgent factory support. She holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Auburn University and lives in Atlanta, Georgia.*



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