

# RED HERRING

This is a simple problem solving exercise that highlights the fact that some problems contain 'red herrings' which throw our thinking off course and make it difficult for us to find appropriate solutions.

## WHEN TO USE THIS EXERCISE

This exercise can be used during any safety meeting or training session when you want to emphasize the point that sometimes people spend a lot of time and effort trying to solve a safety problem in a particular manner when there may be a more appropriate way of doing it. It can be conducted with a group of any size.

## DURATION

Allow 10 to 15 minutes.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED

Handouts of the 'Red Herring' Exercise Sheet.

## HOW TO RUN THIS EXERCISE

- STEP 1**        Distribute a copy of the 'Red Herring' Exercise Sheet to each participant.
- STEP 2**        Tell them to read the sheet and ensure you reinforce the point that IX is the Roman numeral for nine. Ask the participants if they have all seen the Roman numeral for nine before? Get responses.
- STEP 3**        Inform the participants that they have three minutes to try and solve this problem.
- STEP 4**        At the end of three minutes stop the exercise and ask who solved the problem. Provide the answer if no one was able to solve the problem.

## GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Examples of discussion questions include:

- Why was it difficult to find the solution to this problem?
- Did most of you follow the 'red herring' I gave you, that is, try to solve the problem using Roman numerals?
- Have you ever been given a 'red herring' in the workplace? What are some examples?
- How can we be more effective at solving safety problems, that is, ensure we don't spend time trying to find an option that is not possible or not available to us?

## ATTACHMENTS

The 'Red Herring' Exercise Sheet

The 'Red Herring' Answer Page.



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# THE RED HERRING EXERCISE SHEET

Add one line to the Roman numeral below to make the number 6.

IX

Note: The 'I' represents 1 (the number one) in Roman numerals and the 'X' represents 10 (the number ten). Together they form the number 9.

## THE RED HERRING ANSWER PAGE

No one said you couldn't add a line like this:

SIX