

What is Safety?

Safety—"Freedom from danger, injury or damage. Reducing danger or harm."

Acceptable—"Tolerable, Bearable"

Risk- "The chance of injury, damage, or loss; The degree of probability of loss."

The people performing the work need our Help!

A. Duplication, Redundancy & Interpretations of rules they must abide by.

- 1.Federal – OSHA, DOT, EPA, RRC, etc.
- 2.State – DPS, TECQ, TWCC, etc.
- 3.Intangibles-Lawyers, Ins. Comp., Employees.
- 4.Customers-Large, Medium, unsafe, MSA's.
- 5.Contractors-Written to satisfy all the above.
- 6.Employees- Must walk the walk, and are not the same employees as years passed.

Questions we may want to address.

- 1. Can we completely eliminate ALL hazards?
- 2. If we follow every rule, can we guarantee NO incidents?
- 3. Can anyone recite verbatim every rule for your specific group?
- 4. Is leadership & supervision given enough attention?

If the answer to these questions is "NO", are we identifying & correcting the proper concerns?

There were 5,300 work related deaths & 3,600,000 work related injuries in the U.S. in 1995, according to the National Safety Council. To put that into perspective, there were some 57,000 American deaths during a similar 10 year span of the Vietnam conflict. This would indicate that it is nearly as dangerous for the nation to go to work, as it is to go to war!

Why do such incidents happen?

- Are employers negligent in providing safe work environments? OSHA 5A1 General duty clause.
- Do employees not have the information they need to work safe?
- Are employees taking too many conscious or unconscious risks in the workplace?

Today we will seek to identify some of the cause(s) of employee incidents & hopefully give some insight on how we can reduce work related incident rates.

The thrust of most efforts to ensure worker safety have been in the 3 “E’s” to avoid fines, lawsuits, etc.

- 1. Education - About hazards in the work place.
- 2. Engineering-Guards, Barriers, Automatic Shut-offs, etc.
- 3. Enforcement-To ensure there is no question of “lip service” only compliance.

Yet, in spite of all the money spent on safety from all the entities we discussed, workers continue to die or be injured at a steady rate.

WHY ? ? ?

80% of all incidents occur because of unsafe acts.

- 1. Indifferent attitudes
- 2. Inattention or getting in a hurry.
- 3. “I’ve been doing it this way for years.”
- 4. Displays of manhood or doing too much.
- 5. Casual choices – Dangerous jobs they’re careful, but normal jobs they get complacent and get hurt.
- 6. Following the crowd, seeking approval, Job Insecurity, personal problems, etc., etc.
- 7. Or combinations of the above.

The after affect of most unsafe acts result in nothing! Only a small % lead to disasters, and there lies the start of unsafe behaviors. **“I’ve done it before and nothing ever happened”.**

Risk Homeostasis Theory

(Wilde,1994)

Dr. Gerald J.S. Wilde, an authority in risk taking behavior explains that there are factors of employees behavior which tend to neutralize many, (if not most) of the safety modifications we devise & implement in the expectation of reducing accident rates.

Dr. Wilde’s theory of “Risk Homeostasis (also called Danger Compensation) states that individuals develop a personal “Target” of how much risk is generally acceptable – somewhat like the set-point on your thermostat-and a persons behavior tends to maintain risk exposure at or about that target level for a given situation or period of time.

In other words, if Mgmt. installs a device which causes employees to feel safer, the employees react with increased unsafe behavior.

- Auto fatalities dropped after the installation of safety belts, BUT the number of actual incidents rose significantly.
- Installing anti-lock brakes on a fleet of taxis failed to lower accident rates. Follow-up revealed the operators drove both faster & more reckless due to a perceived lower accident risk.

The idea that people respond to increased conditions of safety by engaging in more risky behavior is unthinkable to those of us in the safety field, but just think how many times have you ever noticed;

- 1. Machine guards taken off, but not replaced and no excuses why.
- 2. PPE issued, but often lies around unused.
- 3. Work orders for safety modifications not getting a high priority, until something happens.
- 4. Adages such as “Acceptable Risk” or “Adrenaline junkies.”

Safety campaigns can simply move incidents around rather than reduce them, because the campaigns fail to motivate the individuals to reduce the level of risk they are willing to accept in their personal lives.

So is all lost? Are our efforts useless?

Absolutely Not !!! But first:

We MUST ask ourselves some simple questions.

- 1. Where are the incidents happening?
- 2. Who is getting hurt?
- 3. Who is in charge of the employees?
- 4. How do we train our supervisors?
- 5. What amount of leadership is taught?
- 6. What type of training is the most effective?
- 7. What causes unsafe behaviors & unsafe acts?

Corrective Actions

I. What can we do to control behaviors?

A. Ensure the work environment is safe

1. It's easier to control work environments than to change human nature, so work on this 1st.

The key element would be to educate and ensure that supervision has the tools and works the plan. (All levels)

- Most supervisors were taught years ago by people they respected, and by OJT, which is the most effective type of training.
- So office people are going to come in, put them in a classroom, and tell them this is the new way to perform your job. Did we actually think this would change behaviors or create buy-in?

Demonstrate that safe work practices are a “Condition of Employment”. It must be adopted by all & not some.

- 1. Do this by making it very clear beforehand what you expect. (Ex: OJT folders)
- 2. Show them that you follow these policies yourself.
- 3. Review safe work practices & consistently correct any unsafe work practices you observe immediately.

Try to identify negative attitudes behind the unsafe acts.

- As supervisors, you can change HOW employees work.
- Your strategy should involve:
 - Knowledge of the unsafe situation and a firm organized approach to leadership and constructive training.

Keep lines of communication open to ALL employees.

- Take time to listen to employees concerns. You're not a counselor, but job-related problems exist & can be dealt with.
- If you're a good listener, employees will feel supported & may arrive at solutions on their own.

Our Commitment to focus on the unsafe act.

- Rather than yelling and screaming at the employee, they must be convinced, by their supervisor, that working safe IS the only way to work.
- Again, show them your concern about HOW they work, and that by working safe we all benefit. (They may see auditors occasionally, but they see their supervisor every day.)

Policies and procedures can be different,

- Ex: An employee is not wearing PPE. This is a violation & the employee will be reprimanded and written up.
- If an employee is not wearing the proper PPE or wearing it incorrectly, we intervene to find out if the employee needs additional training, correct gear was not purchased, or if they just grabbed the closest gear & hoped no one would notice.

Strategies

- Point out what you observed & your concern.
- Try to get employees to re-think the situation. Your goal is their buy-in for a safer workplace
- Acknowledge, but don't excuse stressful situations. Listen, Tell them you understand, HOWEVER reiterate that safe work behaviors are a "Condition of Employment".

Strategies (Continued)

- Take reasonable steps to correct the situation.
 - Action may increase employee loyalty.
 - Separating employees to different crews.
 - Referral to H.R., Safety, or Mgmt.
 - Have them go back with a mentor. May have to investigate or follow-up with the prior mentor.

- Come to an agreement on what needs to be done.
 - Demonstrate HOW & WHAT you expect, then have them repeat it back to you.

 - Ask them for their commitment, “Can I count on you?”

- Observe and follow up. (Watch HOW they work.)
 - If change has occurred, tell them your pleased.
 - Behavior that gets rewarded, gets repeated
 - And finally
 - Document all of your discussions with you employee.

SUMMARY

- The hundreds of millions we’ve thrown at educating workers, and at enforcement have proven no more successful.

- We are at a point where those charged with employee safety need to forget improving indirect predictors, & concentrate instead on implementing a viable intervention strategy for modifying safety behaviors. A plan we can generalize across Departments, Companies and Industries.

Summary Suggestions

- By educating ALL supervisors to manage the people. Not a canned course, but have every Operator & Contractor involved in a leadership school. (STEPSN Action Committee)

- Taking what is already in the field: BBS items, JSA's, OJT files, policies & procedures and tweak them to a standardized system that everyone can remember & LIVE with.
- By having everyone involved it reduces cost, and the program will be standardized.
- With thousands of employees lives per year at stake, not to mention the billions of dollars of negative economic impact, we cannot afford to depend on our short-term, self deluding, shotgun approaches to safety programs. Rather, we need to develop a model of safety intervention that brings about a change in employee behaviors and, eventually, a decline in the South Texas occupational death & injury rate.

Thank you.

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