

*A Process to Create  
Your Safety Culture*

- Define safety responsibilities for all levels of the organization.
- Develop a system of results measurement.
- Align management and supervisors through establishing a shared vision of safety and health goals and objectives.
- Implement a process that holds managers and supervisors accountable for creating a safe work environment, setting the proper example, and leading a positive change for safety and health.
- Ensure the safety committee is functioning appropriately, e.g., membership, responsibilities, functions, authority, meeting management skills, etc.
- Provide multiple paths for employees to bring suggestions, concerns, or problems forward. One mechanism should use the chain of command and ensure no repercussions. Hold supervisors and middle managers accountable for being responsive.
- Develop a system that tracks and ensures timeliness in hazard correction.
- Ensure reporting of injuries, first aids, and near misses. Educate employees on the accident pyramid and importance of reporting minor incidents. Prepare management for initial increase in incidents and rise in rates. This will occur if under-reporting exists in the organization. It will level off, then decline as the system changes take hold.
- Evaluate and rebuild the incident investigation system as necessary to ensure that it is timely, complete, and effective. It should get to the root causes and avoid blaming workers.

# Risk Services Notes

## Creating a Safety Culture at Work

Establishing a company safety culture (rather than merely a safety program) is no easy task. Understanding what people believe and understand, what they assume to be true, and what they value is a part of developing a safety culture. It's also a part of engaging leadership at various critical levels throughout the organization.

How can you better understand the key dimensions for improving your safety performance? With a sound understanding of a safety culture and the critical aspects that make up your culture for safety, it can be done and done very well. It is a matter of obtaining the knowledge, skills, abilities, and the tools to move your organization forward, so that you can embrace the reality of a higher level of safety performance!

**Why do you want a strong safety culture?**

It has been observed and confirmed by independent research that developing strong safety cultures have the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process. It is for this single reason that developing these cultures should be top priority for all managers and supervisors.

**What is a safety culture - how will it impact my company?**

Safety cultures consist of shared beliefs, practices, and attitudes that exist at an establishment. Culture is the atmosphere created by those beliefs, attitudes, etc., which shape our behavior. An organization's safety culture is the result of a number of factors such as: management and employee norms, assumptions and beliefs; management and employee attitudes; values, myths, stories; policies and procedures; supervisor priorities, responsibilities and accountability; production pressures vs. quality issues; actions or lack of action to correct unsafe behaviors; employee training and motivation; and employee involvement or "buy-in."

In a strong safety culture, everyone feels responsible for safety and pursues it on a daily basis; employees go beyond "the call of duty" to identify unsafe conditions and behaviors, and intervene to correct them. For instance, in a strong safety culture any worker would feel comfortable walking up to the plant manager or CEO and reminding him or her to wear safety glasses. This type of behavior would not be viewed as forward or over-zealous but would be valued by the organization and rewarded. Likewise, co-workers would routinely look out for one another and point out unsafe behaviors to each other.

A company with a strong safety culture typically experiences few at-risk behaviors; consequently they also experience low accident rates, low turn-over, low absenteeism, and high productivity. These companies typically excel in all aspects of their business and are usually very successful.

Creating a safety culture takes time. It is frequently a multi-year process. A series of continuous process improvement steps can be followed to create a safety culture. Employer and employee commitment are hallmarks of a true safety culture where safety is an integral part of daily operations.

A company at the beginning of the road toward developing a safety culture may exhibit a level of safety awareness, consisting of safety posters and warning signs. As more time and commitment are devoted, a company will begin to address physical hazards and may develop safety recognition programs, create safety committees, and start incentive programs.

Top management support of a safety culture results in providing resources for accident investigations, and safety training. Further progress toward a true safety culture uses accountability systems. These systems establish safety goals, measure safety activities, and charge costs back to the units that incur them. Ultimately, safety becomes everyone's responsibility, not just the safety director's. Safety becomes a value of the organization and is an integral part of operations. Management and employees are committed and involved in preventing losses. Over time the norms and beliefs of the organization shift focus from eliminating hazards to eliminating unsafe behaviors and building systems that proactively improve safety and health conditions. Employee safety and doing something the right way takes precedence over short term production pressures. Simultaneously, production does not suffer but is enhanced due to the level of excellence developed within the organization.

**Obtain Top Management "Buy-in"** - This is the very first step that needs to be accomplished. Top managers must be on board. If they are not, safety and health will compete against core business issues such as production, a battle that will almost always be lost.

**Continue Building "Buy-in"** for the needed changes by building an alliance or partnership between management and employees. A compelling reason for the change must be spelled out to everyone. People have to understand WHY they are being asked to change what they normally do and what it will look like if they are successful.

**Build Trust** - Trusting is a critical part of accepting change and management needs to know that this is the bigger picture, outside of all the details. Trust will occur as different levels within the organization work together and begin to see success.

**Conduct Self Assessments/Bench Marking** - To get where you want to go, you must know where you are starting from.

**Initial Training** of management-supervisory staff and safety committee members. This may include both safety and health training and any needed management, team building, hazard recognition, or communication training, etc. This gives you a core group of people to draw upon as resources and also gets key personnel onboard with needed changes.

**Develop a Safety Vision** with key policies, goals, measures, and strategic and operational plans.

**Define Specific Roles** and responsibilities for safety and health at all levels of the organization.

**Develop Measures** and an ongoing measurement and feedback system.

**Develop Policies for Recognition**, rewards, incentives, and ceremonies.

**Awareness Training and Kick-off** for all employees.

**Continually Measure Performance, Communicate Results, and Celebrate Successes.** Publicizing results is very important to sustaining efforts and keeping everyone motivated. Everyone needs to have a voice, otherwise, they will be reluctant to buy-in.

**On-going Support** - Reinforcement, feedback, reassessment, mid-course corrections, and on-going training is vital to sustaining continuous improvement.



## *SAFETY CREED*



“It is impossible to accurately measure the results of following safety procedures and wearing your personal protective equipment. No one can count the injuries that never happened, the near-misses gone unreported, nor can anyone evaluate the lives that have been saved or plumb the depths of human misery that was spared. But the worker who chooses safety can find satisfaction that they worked wisely and well and that safety has been their first concern.”