

SAFETY / OSHA UPDATE

A Newsletter from High Safety Consulting Services, Ltd.

Information on Safety & Health in Your Workplace



WHO'S ON FIRST?

In Lancaster city, a new baseball stadium opened to welcome the "Lancaster Barnstormers" this summer. I was lucky to have had the opportunity to attend the opening night. Unfortunately, the team lost the first game in their new stadium. But, it was a great experience! I saw many people I hadn't seen in years. There was a sense of community and excitement that filled the air.

I was amazed at the number of balls that left the stadium...heading for some poor soul's car outside the park. I was glad that I didn't find a close parking space! Off course, I worried a bit too about the possibility of a pedestrian suffering head trauma as a result of a ball falling from the sky. I'm sure that this new venue will eventually result in an injury event for someone. I also watched as the team's mascot fell on the "red carpet". With size 40 shoes, and a mask on one's head, I would imagine that walking is quite a skill! So, there's a baseball game from the "safety consultant's" perspective!

Okay, now let me tie this more closely to what I really wanted to discuss...When the players hit the ball, they know exactly where they are going...1st base, then 2nd and so on...They have a sequence to follow. They know they have to focus on the first base before they start working on the second. In safety management, these different steps are not as clearly defined, nor are they always linear. Often times, the safety function (director, coordinator, committee) finds her/ him / it /-self with so many things to do that it is just overwhelming! Some of the things to be done may be compliance related, others may be prevention-based and others may be just good ideas.

So with a field of opportunities, how can we decide where to run first? Without a plan of where to go, we may use resources inefficiently or simply run in directions that will not allow us to significantly contribute to our team or our company. Strategic planning for safety can help develop some direction and long term goals. I consider two aspects to safety: (1) Compliance and hazard reduction. – This area deals with what we need to do to comply and improve the (generally physical) conditions of the workplace. (2) Systems and processes. – This area deals with the human systems which are in place to manage safety. They often are not entirely related to safety alone. They include systems of accountability, planning, allocation of resources, measurements, monitoring, communications and planning.

Traditionally, safety professionals have focused heavily on the first aspect of safety....compliance. I'd suggest the "meat" of an effective program resides in the second aspect. Too many times, we find our roles in safety as "fire-fighting" rather than pro-actively planning the future. I don't think we will ever get away from "fighting fires" – It IS part of the job – but, if you as a safety coordinator / manager / etc. are fighting ALL the fires, then it may be time to re-evaluate your role. Managers and supervisors should be able to fight their own fires! -- with support of the safety function.

When assessing the two aspects of safety (Compliance / Systems), we may identify numerous opportunities for improvement. Selecting which ones will have the most significant impact on an organization can be difficult. Prioritization of goals and objectives are important. This provides the sequence for the team. High Safety can provide a compliance or system review of your workplace and develop a game plan for a winning team.

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RECOGNIZING SAFE PERFORMANCE

How do you recognize safe performance in your organization? Safety incentive programs have been shown to reduce injuries – or shall we say hide them. I've run across more than one safety professional or production manager who has raved about the successful incentive programs they've put in place to reduce injuries. Most can point to some injury reduction statistics to support their claim. Wonderful stuff! MAYBE...If an incentive program is improperly constructed (in fact there are several available commercially) it will drive injuries underground. Watch out for incentive programs that focus only on injury avoidance, provide a large incentive and invoke peer pressure. This combination will assure that employees will avoid reporting injuries. Stories of people limping home, so that they didn't have to "report" the event at work and cause the company to lose their safety bonus are not uncommon. So these programs really do work to motivate people to hide injuries – If that's what you are going for – they work!

I always say that safety programs are the icing on the cake → but you have to have a cake first. The benefits of incentive programs include recognition for a job well done, an opportunity to promote the safety awareness and a way to add some "fun" to the workplace. An incentive program should be one of the last items on your list of "to dos" as a safety manager. After all... do production managers play "production bingo" to fix productivity problems? Do quality managers play "quality lottery" to fix a quality problem? So why would we think we can improve safety by playing games? Fix safety issues directly; don't use games to do it. So if you want to add some icing to your cake here are a few suggestions

1) Don't make it a high-stakes game. – Reasons: The higher the stakes the greater the chance of driving things underground. Also, if the company has a bad spell and the prize-ridden safety incentive program must be closed down, the perception is that "management" doesn't care about safety any more." Your company should always be able to afford it.

2) Incorporate various levels in the program. – Recognize the individual and the group. This will give opportunity for everyone to succeed. – Reasons: If one individual's performance sinks the group, then the group has lost the opportunity to participate and no one can succeed.

3) Don't use just accident avoidance as the measurement. – Reason: I could write a whole book on this alone. It is not statistically valid to hold individuals accountable to a measurement which does not directly measure safety and has high variability in small sample sizes. Use things like safety suggestions made, perfect safety audit scoring, awareness or knowledge contests to mention a few. Be creative.

4) Stay away from cash and items with low permanence – Reason: Cash bonuses become entitlements quickly. Cash is spent on bills and rarely means something special to the recipient. Items that are quickly spent or used up won't be remembered as well as items with permanence. If you provide expendable items, also include a non-expendable item that will help the recipient to remember the milestone reached.

5) Don't forget recognition and sincere appreciation. – Reason: This is really inexpensive, but often one of the most valuable things a manager can do for someone. Recognizing individuals for their achievements publicly can make individual feel special. Even looking someone in the eyes and telling them that performing safely and following the work procedures is important to the company and thanking them for being attentive to their own personal safety. This simple act takes two minutes, but can really mean a lot. Also, be careful about public recognition, some cultures and individuals are embarrassed by such displays, so always check with the individual before hand.

Recognition of a job well-done is (perhaps in every safety management assessment that I conduct) one of the lowest rated categories by employees and supervisors. The bottom-line is that most of us don't believe we receive enough positive recognition and we'd all like more. So what better gift that just saying "Thank you"?

I have a lot more suggestions for your incentive program. If you'd like a list of effective program characteristics, let us know and we'll e-mail my summary.

OSHA UPDATE

I was just thinking last night about the last time OSHA has issued a significant final rule. -- It's been awhile. I believe the most significant rule change was the change in the recordkeeping standards a few years ago. OSHA hasn't been very quick to publish new rules in the last number of years. There are many things "in the works" but this has been the case for sometime. My predictions that we won't see (m)any regulations passed this year seem to be holding true. There have been four bills introduced and passed by the House which could get some traction. These would change some of the procedural aspects to the benefit of business, but these are not overly significant changes in my view. Small employers could recover attorney fees if they prevail – so this helps the lawyers.

INDUSTRIAL PRESS OPERATIONS

Industrial power presses and brake presses are integral to many production operations. These pieces of equipment are fairly complex and pose very serious hazards to those who use and maintain them. OSHA's special emphasis program (SEP) on amputation injuries has resulted in an increased awareness of compliance for these pieces of equipment. Outside of notifying OSHA of a fatality or a catastrophe (3 or more admitted to a hospital), this is the only other horizontal OSHA standard which requires a formal report be sent to the agency following an injury involving a powered industrial press! See: 29 CFR 1910.217(g). If you have industrial presses in your operation you shouldn't miss signing up for an up-coming program being sponsored by High Safety Consulting Services, Ltd. We have Rockford Systems of Illinois scheduled to present an industrial press and related equipment safety course at our facility in Lancaster, PA. [Rockford Systems](#) is a recognized leader in providing guarding and control systems for presses and we are looking forward to this full-day program scheduled for November 29. The cost is \$265 per person. Register at www.highsafety.com

UPCOMING PROGRAMS OFFERED BY HSCSL

Our complete course listing can be found on our website <http://www.highsafety.com/hsl/resources/courses/>.

[National Safety Council's Defensive Driving Course](#) – August 19th from 8:00 AM to Noon

[Respiratory Protection Training](#) – August 29th from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM

[Industrial Hygiene Methods](#) – September 7th through September 9th from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

[OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Course](#) – September 26th through September 27th from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

NOTE: All of our prior newsletters are archived on our website under the "Contact Us"



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