

Safety Cornerstones

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A Newsletter of Practical Compliance & Safety Tips

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You don't need to be a good cook to learn how to serve up some "safety pie."



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Driving your safety program by watching your incident rates is like trying to steer your car by looking in your rearview mirror. There's a better way.



Winter 2009



ON MY MIND

Safety: Easy as PIE

by Paul Lawonn

This article is not to suggest there is anything easy about safety. Rather, it offers a formula that, when coupled with good old-fashioned hard work, will bring about success. My personal formula for success is based on the acronym PIE, or Passion, Impact and Engagement, which I have found to have a strong application in managing safety.

Passion is the thing that stirs excitement and gets you up in the morning. It drives you to push harder and to get better.

Impact asks: Are you making a difference? Are you leaving something better than you found it? **Engagement** focuses on your level of participation in life and how well you build strong relationships with and involve others.

How does PIE apply to safety? At the leadership level, leaders must recognize that if people are your greatest asset, then you have to develop a passion for keeping people and their work environments safe; helping them to go home safely to their

families. With a strong enough passion, even production demands won't overrule the practice of safety in the work environment!

Impact looks at how we make a difference when it comes to safety. At the leadership level, impact applies to all your areas of responsibility and can be measured by how safe areas and people are because of the things you are doing or directing. The amount of passion you and others have for safety dictates the impact you will have in the workplace. Do you find and fix safety issues right away or do you turn a blind eye to things you know aren't right?

Finally, engagement is measured on two levels: how much you are personally involved with safety and how much you involve others in safety-related activities. At the leadership level, engagement is the realization that you don't have all the answers and you can't do it all yourself; you need to get your employees 'in the game' when it comes to safety. Are you

listening to frontline workers who are facing safety issues every day? Are you engaging them when you are seeking solutions to issues? Are you engaged in finding solutions?

Passion, impact and engagement may sound as easy as PIE but it requires effort. If you have a strong enough reason for safety, your **passion** for safety will leave a positive **impact** because you will be **engaged** every day.



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OSHA & Planning for a New Administration

Historically, when a Democratic administration takes office, there is an increase in legislative activity and enforcement efforts. Issues that may top of the priority list for OSHA include combustible dust, ergonomics and enforcement. Anticipate that Congress will push OSHA to develop a combustible dust standard in response to the Imperial Sugar Company dust explosion that took place in Port Wentworth, Georgia in February 2008. In that tragic event, sugar dust exploded, killing 13 people and injuring 40 others.

During the Clinton Administration, OSHA developed and promulgated an ergonomics standard that was rescinded shortly after the Bush Administration took office in January 2001. Repetitive motion and cumulative trauma injuries continue to lead the types of injuries and illnesses reported in industry today and these types of incidents cost billions of dollars in workers' compensation costs to say nothing of the human suffering that comes from bona fide issues and concerns.

One of the issues raised by organized labor during the presidential campaign was OSHA, under the Bush Administration, was not as aggressive with enforcement efforts as in the past. A recent press release from OSHA shows that since 2003, OSHA has been very consistent in its enforcement efforts and this has resulted in some of the lowest incident and death rates ever. Nonetheless, the new OSHA Administrator will probably use 2009 to demonstrate that in the Obama administration, OSHA will be vigilant with enforcement efforts.

Finally, Congress could be asked to vote on the "Protect American Workers Act" (the Act) introduced last year and co-sponsored by then Senator Obama and Senator Kennedy. The Act would bring felony charges against business leaders for willful violations to OSHA standards. Under current the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act), felony charges, stiff fines and prison terms can be levied against individual business leaders if a willful violation results in the death of an employee. The Act would open the door for felony charges for individual business leaders for any willful violation.



LESSON TO LEARN:

There are many OSHA standards that require site-specific safety programs be developed and maintained. Many of these programs mandate training for affected employees within the company and many require some type of ongoing inspections be completed either on a shift-by-shift basis, a daily basis or a monthly basis. Take the time now to ensure that your company is doing all it should to help workers perform safe work in a safe work environment. In addition to the all the compliance resources offered by TJ&S, OSHA provides a host of information to assist you at www.osha.gov.

Safety Program Spotlight

Focusing on the Frontline in 2009

For many, approaching another 12 months of monitoring workplace safety is unfortunately nothing more than a roll of the dice and a hope that all will go well. The good news is that there is better way. Focusing on the frontline helps to clarify how a safety program should be developed, communicated and integrated into your daily operation. Here are four steps to consider as you focus on the frontline in 2009.

Safety programs aren't designed to keep from getting in trouble with OSHA or to lower work comp costs. They are designed to keep people safe while they are on the job performing work in accordance with the General Duty Clause in the Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSH Act) of 1970 that states that it is the employer's responsibility to provide a workplace that is free from recognized hazards that are or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

To do so, you must first identify the frontline's safety needs: The frontline is the worker operating the machine, the skilled trade stringing wire, the administrative assistant working on the spreadsheet, or the person hanging parts on the line as it passes by. The frontline is also the frontline leadership: the frontline supervisor and/or union steward for a specific work group or area. The frontline is the group of people, both workers and immediate supervisor, who are 'making it happen' for the company. Safety programs are primarily designed to keep the frontline team safe in all their job tasks and responsibilities. Whether the program is lockout/tagout, hazard communication, personal protective equipment, or knowing the details of the emergency action plan, the safety program is focused on the frontline and making sure they all have the information they need to be safe and successful.

Second, identify the areas of emphasis for the new year. Look back to 2008 to see what caused the most problems and questions for the frontline to better understand where to focus in 2009. What was the primary nature of injuries or illnesses in 2008? What was the primary cause(s) for injury or illness? What body parts were most frequently injured? What department or work area was most besieged by injuries or illnesses? As you focus on 2009, categorize your 2008 data into major blocks of information; find common causes and links to help you focus on the frontline in 2009.

For example, if repetitive motion injuries topped the list of accident causes, look to see where people are performing repetitive tasks and take time to fully evaluate work station design and body motions. If frontline workers must do a lot of lifting, is there an opportunity for lift assists? If there is a lot of repetitive motion involved in a given task, is there a chance that job rotation may alter the muscle groups used and reduce fatigue? Or if contusions are the primary cause of injuries, are people working in tight areas with little opportunity to safely move about? If one particular work area or department has the highest number of incidents, consider what is making the work or the area more hazardous than any other area, how well are safety programs integrated into the daily operation, are any proactive safety activities performed such as safety audits and inspections, and how well prepared is the frontline leaders to manage the safety responsibility.

Third, after auditing 2008, develop specific action plans to help reduce specific injuries and illnesses in 2009. That may mean performing some training in areas because the root cause of injuries and illnesses were poorly communicated safety programs or safe work methods that should be followed to avoid hazards. It might mean developing some proactive exercises (like safety audits) the work group or area can perform on a regular basis to help reduce hazards and to find and fix unsafe conditions.

The fourth step is to develop metrics to help measure and track improvements or that can signal when more help is needed. The most common safety metric used in all industry today are incident rates in three categories: recordable incidents, lost time incidents, and lost time/restricted incidents. These are the rates tracked by OSHA and other national safety organizations and the

most common used in industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) tracks this information and publishes updated statistics each year. Unfortunately, incident rates are trailing indicators and don't help an organization to identify issues before it is too late. Driving your safety program by watching your incident rates is like trying to steer your car by looking in your rearview mirror. Leading indicators help an organization to be more predictive in their safety performance and allow enough time to make changes. Leading indicators are activity-based metrics that measure the presence of safety rather the absence of it. Activity-based metrics include items such as the number of audits performed, the number of employees trained, the number of unsafe conditions corrected each month, etc. When putting together safety metrics, focus on the frontline and develop measurements that enhance the safety of the frontline worker and the frontline leader.

Focusing on the frontline in 2009 sends a strong safety program message that is targeted at making a workplace safe for those who are actually performing the work and for those who are guiding those workers. It's good sense that lays the foundation for a great year!

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