

Behavior-Based Safety

Overview of topic

Behavior-based safety is a relatively new term that is being used to reflect a proactive approach to safety and health management.

So what exactly is this relatively new concept, and how can it apply to your organization? Let's begin with a definition. Behavior-based safety describes a proactive approach to injury prevention that either focuses on at-risk behaviors that can lead to an injury, or on safe behaviors that can contribute to injury prevention. In other words, behavior-based safety is an injury prevention process.

Safety is really an evolving process, and that means it's continuous. If you really want to reduce work-related injuries, and keep reducing them, you need to make safety a way of life by involving employees in daily activities consistent with the vision of a Total Safety Culture.

Though many people can agree on the definition for behavior-based safety, few can agree on what the process actually involves. For example, some experts feel that behavior-based safety should be a rigid set of procedures; others feel it should be more flexible, and should integrate personal values. Still others feel that behavior-based safety should incorporate humanistic concepts, such as self-esteem and personal motivation techniques.

Note: This training material is based on Dr. E. Scott Geller's "DO IT" approach to behavior-based safety, but it applies to other approaches as well. As with any type of training, the content needs to be adapted to the needs of the trainees.

Corporate safety culture

The way each employee views the organization's corporate culture and the role that each employee plays in helping the organization achieve certain goals can have a significant impact on his or her individual motivation toward safety.

Whether employee attitudes are good or bad is at the core of what predicts results in terms of workplace safety and health. When refining the safety culture and performance of an organization, Dr. Geller identifies some of the most important aspects that you may wish to concentrate on, including:

- * Developing a clear safety mission and goals at the corporate level.
- * Communicating the vision and goals to all levels of the organization.
- * Enabling each area of the organization to attain its own specific safety goals.
- * Encouraging individual participation by all members of the organization.
- * Empowering employees to set and achieve their own safety goals.
- * Fostering mutual respect and support at all levels of the organization.

A solid corporate culture is the foundation from which a successful process of employee involvement can be developed and sustained.

Benefits

Behavior-based safety is a proactive approach to safety and health management. The process recognizes unsafe or at-risk behaviors as a frequent cause of both minor and serious injuries. The goal of this approach is to reduce the occurrence of at-risk behavior by modifying the behavior through observation, feedback, and positive interventions aimed at developing safe work habits.

When people take control of safety, they see safety and health performance improving, and they feel good about it because they know that they are making a real difference. They get a sense of accomplishment that helps keep them going. And, while most workers genuinely care about their safety, and the safety of those around them, they often don't know how to *show* others that they care. Behavior-based safety can help teach workers how to act on their caring.

Employee training

OSHA regulations do not contain training requirements for the behavior-based safety topic. However, a training program can provide an overview of behavior-based safety and can be used to familiarize employees with your behavior-based safety process.

Training tips

Discuss the safety culture and safety goals of your organization.

Outline some of the benefits your organization has realized since your behavior-based process has been in place.