

# Developing a Safety Culture



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- What is a safety culture?
- Differences between safety culture and safety climate
- Elements of a safety culture
- How to create a safety culture
- Management responsibilities
- Behavioral safety

# What is Safety Culture?

- **Safety Culture** is the enduring value and priority placed on workers and public safety by everyone in every group at every level of an organization.
- It refers to the extent to which individuals and groups will commit to:
  - personal responsibility for safety
  - act to preserve safety
  - enhance and communicate safety concerns
  - strive to actively learn
  - adapt and modify behavior based on lessons learned from mistakes
  - be rewarded in a manner consistent with these values.

# What About Safety Climate?

- **Safety Climate** is the temporal measure of safety culture
- Subject to commonalities among individual perceptions of the organization
- It is therefore situational based

# Key Differences

## Culture vs. Climate

- **Safety Culture** is commonly viewed as an enduring characteristic
- **Safety Climate** is viewed as a temporary state that is subject to change depending on current circumstance
- **Safety Culture** is the attitudes, values, norms, and beliefs that a particular group of people share with respect to risk and safety
- **Safety Climate** can be defined as a “snapshot” of employees’ perceptions of the current environment or prevailing conditions which impact upon safety

# Key Differences

## Culture vs. Climate

- **Safety Culture** is a group of individuals guided in their behavior by their joint belief in the importance of safety.
- **Safety Climate** varies individually depending on current perceptions and can change daily. Perception of safety procedures and rules are a reflection of safety climate.
- **Safety Cultures** build joint responsibility between individuals from management to employee.

# Elements of a Safety Culture

- Organizational Commitment to Safety
- Operational Personnel
- Formal Safety System
- Informal Safety System

# Organizational Commitment to Safety

- Refers to the degree to which an organizations upper management prioritizes safety in decision-making and allocates adequate resources to safety
- An organizations commitment to safety can be reflected by three major components:
  - Safety Values
  - Safety Fundamentals
  - Going Beyond Compliance

# Operational Personnel

- Refers to the degree to which those directly involved in the supervision of employees' safety behavior are actually committed to safety and reinforce the safety values espoused by upper management.
- These personnel include:
  - supervisors/foremen
  - Maintenance supervision
  - Safety Trainers



# Formal Safety System

- Refers to the processes for reporting and addressing both occupational and process safety hazards.
- These systems include
  - Reporting systems
  - Feedback and response
  - Safety personnel

# Informal Safety Systems

- Refers to the unwritten rules pertaining to safety behavior including rewards and punishments for safe and unsafe actions
- These systems include:
  - Accountability
  - Authority
  - Employee professionalism

# Creating a Safety Culture

- Stop relying solely on the line-management
- Involve all employees
- Stop accepting the “Blind Eye” syndrome

# Leadership is Essential

- How does safety become a value?
  - Consistent demonstrable leadership
- Senior managers should instill “safety is a value” to all employees and design a **safety vision**
  - This vision should spell out the entities objectives, standards, and what actions they will be taking to reach it

# Selling the Vision

- Upper management need to develop and personally commit to the vision
  - This can be accomplished by:
    - leading by example
    - Highlighting an unsafe condition or practice and correcting it on the spot (without casting blame)
    - Don't allow the "I'm too busy" phrase to impede the process. Set aside ½ an hour to 1 hour a day to visit operational areas

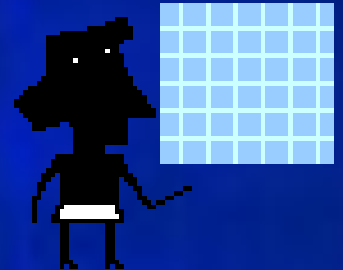
# Assigning Responsibility and Accountability for Safety

- Upper management need to take personal responsibility for bringing the vision to fruition!
- Responsibility and accountability needs to be cascaded throughout the entire organizational employee structure



# Focusing on Success and Not Failure

- Measure proactive successes
  - Number of weekly safety inspections
  - Number of personnel safety trained
  - Number of personnel receiving safety refreshers
  - Number of SOPs reviewed
  - Number of remedial actions completed
  - Number of near misses reported
  - Number of safety suggestions received



# Align Policies and Practices With the Stated Vision

- Policies and practices **MUST** be aligned with entity's safety objectives
- All departments must be involved
  - e.g. Purchasing must know exactly what safety equipment each department needs
  - Human resources must practice more sound hiring and placement standards
  - All departments need to be involved with the procurement of safety precautions and suggestions

# Safety Management is Key for Maintaining a Safety Culture

- Different from safety leadership, safety management deals with the practical implementation of the espoused vision
- The vision should be continuously sold to managers and supervisors
- Middle managers should engage employees in safety conversations
  - Ask what can be done to prevent an injury while performing a certain job. If something is identified be prepared to deal with it as quickly as possible and monitor the status of the remedial action until completion.

# Proactive Focus on Safety at the Operational Level

- One of the primary causes of accidents is poor management control
- Front line managers play a HUGE role in embedding safety visions within the file and rank employees
- Front line managers **MUST NEVER** turn a blind eye to unsafe practices or condition
  - This will be seen as visionary lip service!

# Management Responsibilities

- Front line managers should be vigorously encouraged to:
  - Correct any and all unsafe acts when seen
  - Identify unsafe conditions
  - Discuss safety with the work group each and every day
  - Close any outstanding remedial actions
  - Conduct safety training and risk assessments
  - Provide feedback on safety issues to the workgroup
  - Praise and or acknowledge people who are doing things safely

# Instilling Employee Ownership

- How people are approached about safety will generally determine their subsequent behavior and values
- ALL levels of management must actively show they care about the well being and safety of every employee



# Behavioral Safety

- Behave – to act, react, or function in some specified way
- Safety – being safe, freedom from risk or danger
- Behavioral safety – the way in which an individual responds to a decision involving risk or safety

# Socio-Technical Systems

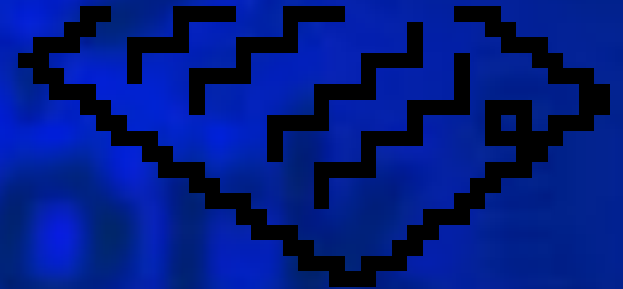
- Looking at work cultures in this sense means recognizing that the work culture influences the way operations are performed.
- Without a supportive culture even the best designed safety programs will FAIL!

# Elements of a Social System

- Social systems include:
  - Trust
  - Collaboration
  - Communication
  - Working in teams

# Elements of a Technical System

- Technical systems include:
  - Operational procedures
  - Equipment calibrations
  - Policies



# Socio-Technical Systems

- Our ability to overlap these two is the point where our productivity, quality, and safety will be maximized.
- High accident frequency rates “normally” correlate with low employee perceptions of the safety culture in perception surveys.

# Socio-Technical Leaders

- Qualities of a transformational leader:  
Ability to create, communicate, and implement a new vision
- We must instill in others the capability to create common values around safety goals

# Challenges of Tomorrow

- Focus on safety behavior, not safety attitudes
- Entails adopting a collaborative problem solving approach to identifying critical sets of safe and unsafe behaviors
- Management and employees **MUST** participate together

# Resources

- The Values Based Safety Process. Terry McSween
- Practical Guidance for Introducing the Ethos that “Safety is a Value”. July 2000 Dr. Dominic Cooper
- Grassroots Safety Culture. Steven I. Simon, Ph.D.
- Behavioral Safety. Training Solutions, summer 1999 Edition
- Goal Setting for Safety. The Safety and Health Practitioner, November 1993
- Implementing Culture Change. Steven I. Simon Ph.D.
- On the Future of the Safety Profession. Steven I. Simon Ph.D.
- Measuring and Improving Safety Culture. The ESH Handbook for the Public Sector

QUESTIONS?

