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# Building a Strong Safety Culture Across All Industries

Enhancing Safety, Engagement, and Accountability

Practical Compliance +

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# What is Safety Culture?

- Shared beliefs, values, and attitudes toward safety
- Goes beyond compliance—focuses on behaviors and mindset
- Involves everyone: leadership, management, and employees
- **Common Sense**



# Why Safety Culture Matters



- Reduces workplace incidents and injuries
- Boosts employee morale and engagement
- Fewer incidents means less downtime and higher productivity
- Protects company reputation and lowers costs
- Encourages proactive hazard identification and resolution



# Key Elements of a Strong Safety Culture

- ***Leadership by example***
- Safety is a core value, not just a priority
- Empower and train staff to speak up and participate
- ***Open Communication/What would employees say***
- Transparent and two-way; safety is everyone's business
- Learning Environment
- Encourage reporting, learn from near-misses
- Consistency & Accountability
- Policies enforced fairly and consistently



# Safety Culture Across Industries



- Construction: Focus on PPE, fall protection, and pre-job briefs
- Healthcare: Emphasis on infection control and patient handling
- Transportation: Prioritize fatigue management and compliance
- Manufacturing: Safe machine use and lockout/tagout procedures
- Office Environments: Ergonomics



# Mental Health & Safety it impacts your bottom line

- Mental health impacts safety – Stress, fatigue, and distraction increase the risk of workplace accidents and injuries.
- Prevention saves money – Supporting mental well-being reduces incidents, workers' compensation claims, and lost productivity.
- A whole-person approach – Integrating mental health into safety programs builds a healthier, more resilient workforce.

# Risk Assessment

- Best Practice
- Regulatory requirements
- Industry Standards
- Common Sense
- Civil and Criminal exposure
- Your History



# Risk Exposure

- Regulatory Fines
- Civil Exposure
- Criminal Exposure



# Who?

- Who is most affected by a poor safety culture?
- What is the potential for harm in your business?
- Who are most responsible for safety?



# Smokey the Bear Rule

- Only you can prevent forest fires!
- Do your employees know that only they can prevent accidents?
- Common Sense



# Poll Question #1

Do your job descriptions include a specific safety component or responsibility statement?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

# Poll Question #1

Answer: **Yes** — OSHA encourages employers to integrate safety responsibilities into job descriptions as part of a written safety program. While not explicitly mandated for every role under federal law, including them supports compliance with the **General Duty Clause (OSHA 29 USC § 654)** and helps establish clear expectations.

## Why it matters:

- Supports OSHA-required hazard communication and training.
- Strengthens defense in case of incident-related investigations.

# Safety Management Cycle



# Policy

- Written policies are a two-way street
- Everyone is responsible for knowing and following the policy.
- Making sure that you can and do follow policy.



# A Safety Management Plan



- Written plan
- Clear expectations
- Management support
- Accountability

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# Qualifications

- Making sure your employees can have success.
- Written Documentation
- What is negligent hiring and negligent retention?

# Training and Communication

- Can you demonstrate through actions that you are supporting your safety culture?
- Simple healthy personal contacts are a basic foundation for safety.
- Check ins and stated expectations.
- What are your resources?



# Monitoring

- You are expected to know when things are not going according to plan.
- You need everyone to know you need to know!
- Do your employees know how to report safety concerns?



# Do Something

- React to concerns or negative events, assuring compliance with your policies.
- Adjust your policies if needed.
- Training or discipline are legitimate expectations of the plan.
- Common Sense



# Poll Question #2

A truck or truck trailer combination rated over 10,000 lbs GVWR used in commerce are regulated by the US DOT?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

# Poll Question #2

**Answer: Yes**

**Regulation: 49 CFR §390.5** – The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) apply to commercial motor vehicles with a **gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)** or **gross combination weight rating (GCWR) over 10,000 pounds** when used in interstate commerce.

**Compliance Note:** While this is true for **interstate commerce**, Some state have different rules. Always check your state's DOT or motor carrier regulations to confirm applicability.

# IF I DO THIS I WON'T HAVE ANY EMPLOYEES LEFT!

- Your culture is developed over time, it won't change overnight.
- What are your current costs for safety shortcomings: workers comp, damaged property, damaged equipment, unproductive work hours.

# Catastrophic Event

- Fatal Injuries
- Serious Injuries
- Large property loss
- Criminal or Civil actions



# Who are the witnesses?

- Your employees frequently will be the primary witnesses if you have a bad event.
- They will be telling investigators what your safety culture is all about.
- Can you demonstrate your expectations for your employees especially in safety sensitive positions?

# Poll Question #3

Does your company conduct reasonable suspicion training for supervisors — and do you know if you are required to?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

# Poll Question #3

Answer: **Yes** — If you operate in a **DOT-regulated** environment (49 CFR Part 382 for CDL drivers, or modal-specific rules for transit, pipeline, aviation, etc.), supervisors *must* receive at least 60 minutes on alcohol misuse and 60 minutes on controlled substances.

For non-DOT employers, training is not federally mandated but is considered best practice to reduce liability and maintain a defensible testing program.

## **Why it matters:**

- Required for DOT-regulated drivers.
- Helps ensure legally defensible testing decisions.
- Reduces risk of discrimination claims.

# Case Study

Roy is a long-time employee with a known alcohol problem. He is involved in an industrial accident and hurts himself and a co-worker. The subsequent investigation shows that the problem was common knowledge.

- How does this history affect the potential ramifications?

# Real-World Example:



**Before:** High injury rate, inconsistent training

**After:**

- Leadership walk-throughs
- Monthly toolbox talks
- Anonymous safety suggestions

 40% reduction in incidents in 12 months



# Creating a Culture Shift

- Assess your current state (surveys, audits, observations)
- Engage leadership to model safety behaviors
- Train and empower employees at all levels
- Celebrate wins and address gaps constructively
- Review & adapt safety programs regularly



# Hiring for quality and setting the tone from day one

- Select with purpose - every new hire impacts culture, performance, and long-term success
- Set clear expectations early - setting standards for behavior and accountability
- Common Sense

# Your Role in Safety Culture

- Model safe behavior
- Report concerns without fear
- Be part of the solution
- Support a culture where “safe” is normal



# Takeaways

- Safety culture is everyone's responsibility
- Strong cultures prevent incidents before they happen
- Leadership, communication, and consistency are key
- Any organization, any size, any industry—can and should build one



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# Questions & Discussion

Let's share ideas—what's working in your workplace?

What challenges are you seeing?

Let's learn from each other.

Addendum  
Additional Case Study

# Case Study: Building a Strong Safety Culture Across All Industries - Client Profile

A mid-sized company with 250 employees operating across three divisions: manufacturing, warehousing/distribution, and administrative services. The company had historically treated safety as a compliance requirement rather than an integrated cultural value. Safety policies existed but were inconsistently enforced, training was sporadic, and near-miss reporting was almost non-existent.

# Initial Challenges

**High Incident Frequency:** Recordable injury rate was 40% higher than the industry average.

**Siloed Safety Practices:** Manufacturing had PPE protocols, but the warehouse lacked standardized forklift safety programs. Office environments had minimal ergonomic considerations.

**Low Employee Engagement:** Safety meetings were viewed as “check-the-box” exercises.

**Gaps in Leadership Accountability:** Supervisors often delegated safety responsibility to EHS staff instead of modeling safe behaviors.

# Intervention Plan

The organization partnered with a risk and safety consulting team to develop a comprehensive Safety Culture Improvement Initiative.

## Key steps:

**Leadership Alignment Workshop:** Facilitated sessions with Leadership, department heads, and Managers, to define “What safety means to us”.

**Established a Safety Vision Statement:** “We value safety as much as productivity and quality.” The baseline safety culture assessment includes an anonymous employee survey, incident data review, and facility walk-throughs. Identified inconsistent hazard reporting, unclear accountability, and a lack of visible leadership involvement. Customized Training Programs.

**Manufacturing:** Hands-on machine guarding and lockout/tagout refreshers and New hire training.

**Warehouse:** Forklift certification, pedestrian safety zones, and load stacking best practices.

**Office:** Ergonomic workstation assessments and slip/trip prevention.

**All divisions:** Near-miss reporting training to promote proactive hazard recognition. Safety Champions Program. Selected peer leaders in each department to act as role models, encourage reporting, and bridge communication between employees and management: metrics and Recognition. Monthly safety scorecards are sent to all employees. Quartely and Annual Safety department Recognition

# Results After 12 Months

**Incident Rate Reduction:** 52% decrease in OSHA recordables.

**Insurance Premium Savings:** Workers' comp premiums dropped by 18% due to reduced claims frequency and severity.

**Lessons Learned:** Safety Culture is Everyone's Responsibility — from the CEO to the newest hire. Visible Leadership Commitment drives employee buy-in. Proactive Reporting of hazards prevents costly incidents. Tailored Training ensures relevance to all job types, not just "high-risk" roles. Recognition Programs keep safety top-of-mind in a positive way.

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# Key Takeaway for All Industries:

No matter the industry — manufacturing, transportation, logistics, office, or service — embedding safety into daily operations, leadership priorities, and employee engagement transforms safety from a compliance requirement into a shared core value.