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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Supervisors – the key to an effective safety culture

Being a supervisor in a manufacturing environment has many challenges. Supervisors are often primarily responsible for productivity. They must ensure employees are properly trained and perform at a high level. Supervisors are also entrusted with the obligation to safeguard the well-being of their workers. This balance between productivity and safety can be difficult to maintain, but it is critical to the success of the organization. But how can supervisors influence employees to work safely and with a proper accident awareness?



As an employer, you need to train and equip your supervisors to be safety supervisors. Here are seven characteristics a safety conscious supervisor will exhibit:

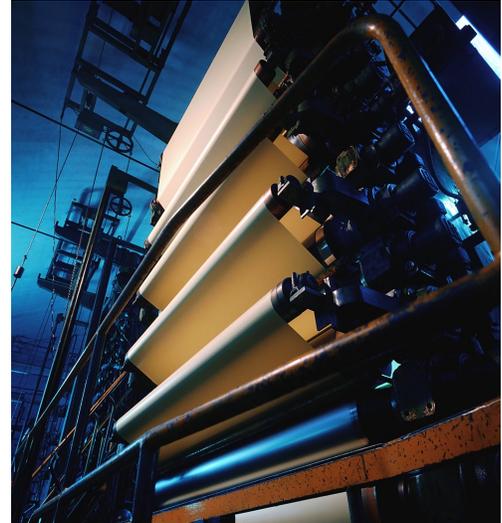
- ◆ **KNOWLEDGE** - They must know the rules of safety that apply to the employees and work activities they supervise. They know where to obtain expert safety advice when needed to ensure employees work safely.
- ◆ **A SAFETY EXAMPLE** - Effective supervisors will set a good example by demonstrating safety in their own work habits and personal conduct. Talk means little without a demonstrated commitment to safety.
- ◆ **COMMUNICATION SKILLS** - Supervisors need to encourage employees to discuss hazards associated with the tasks they must complete for you. Supervisors must be certain each employee understands and accepts all SAFETY RULES.
- ◆ **HAZARD ANTICIPATION** - Do supervisors anticipate hazards before they occur, or risks which may rise from changes in equipment or methods? They should inspect the work environment regularly looking for problems and unsafe behavior and address them immediately.
- ◆ **MOTIVATION PRACTICES** - Supervisors should motivate their employees to work safely by methods such as: periodic meetings, awards for good safety records, use of educational materials (films, printed matter, field demonstrations), and your personal approval of a difficult task handled well and safely.

A safety culture is driven from the top

There's a great deal of emphasis placed on safety systems, procedures, protocols and practices. Employers can even purchase "compliant" safety programs that they can adapt for their specific industry. But, what makes a safety program successful is the organization's commitment to safety. This includes management, line supervisors and employees, but make no mistake it starts at the top with ownership and senior management.

Generally there are eight fundamental elements to a safety program:

1. management leadership
2. accountability, responsibility and authority
3. employee participation
4. hazard assessment and control
5. employee training
6. accident reporting and investigation
7. post injury loss management
8. evaluation of the program's effectiveness



The success of the safety program is driven from the top and measured at the bottom. Management must establish and integrate the safety culture into the organization's objectives. Results are measured at the bottom. This typically includes metrics such as the number of workplace injuries, the number of lost days from work and cost of losses.

How can management immediately demonstrate they are committed to workplace safety? One key way is to put it in writing. Establish a written safety policy that is signed by the organization's CEO. Committing your safety policies to writing and sharing them with the workforce makes the program concrete and not arbitrary. Many safety oriented organizations have detailed safety policies that also include objectives and goals, as well as, a resource commitment to safety. An organization with a strong safety culture will balance productivity and safety. They will go hand-in-hand.

But, if your safety program is to succeed, every employee must participate. There are a host of opportunities for employees to participate, including helping to establish the initial program, assisting in the implementation of that program and even evaluating the program's success or need for modification. Having employees participate on a safety committee is a great opportunity to tap into a source of working knowledge about your operation. In some states, safety committees are mandated by law, but even if there is no such state mandate, safety committees can be a vital part of any safety program. The safety committee should have a charter and be recognized by the organization's top management as being important in the organizations overall priorities.

Finally, consider involving employees in operational safety inspections. They will know the fundamentals of the operation better than management, the safety director or even an expert brought from the outside that specializes in workplace safety. There should also be regular communication between management and employees covering workplace safety and health issues. This can be part of a monthly safety meeting or through an intercompany newsletter. Management should never discourage participation by employees in the safety program and they should encourage reporting unsafe conditions and acts directly and honestly. The key is to continuously communicate to your employees that their health and welfare is the organization's primary concern.

There are two words that characterize a successful safety program, "demonstrated commitment ". Organizations that achieve their safety goals and objectives tend to have everyone "rowing in the same direction". The benefits are reduced loss costs, a better competitive position and compliance with regulatory requirements. Committing to safety just makes good business sense.

CMTA Advocacy

CMTA employs staff lobbyists who work on issues important to manufacturers - environmental regulations, taxes, employment rules, skilled workforce, infrastructure, energy costs, civil justice, and economic analysis concepts. They monitor the bills, write letters and testify before legislative committees, and ask the Governor to veto or sign bills that reach his desk. We also participate in development of regulations by state agencies.

Environmental Regulations

Environmental compliance can be a costly nightmare if rules are poorly drafted and not based on sound science. We stop bad bills or fix them so you can keep operating in California.

Taxes

Your bottom line survival depends on fair and predictable taxes that support new investment and hiring. We are always looking for ways to lower your tax burden.

Employment Rules

California has special overtime and other workplace rules that raise your costs and expose you to employee lawsuits. Bills to provide more workplace flexibility and lower costs are a high priority.

Lower workers' compensation costs

California's workers' compensation premiums are the highest in the nation. Injured workers deserve fair compensation but too much money is spent on providers and wasteful bureaucracy. We support legislation and regulations to lower your workers' compensation costs.

Civil Justice

You face potential lawsuits from every direction - product liability, wrongful termination, and environmental hazards. We want you to get fair treatment by preserving arbitration rights and limiting class actions.

Skilled Workforce

We want to preserve state funding for career and technical education (CTE) and keep a pipeline of skilled workers available for your facilities.

For additional information, please visit our website at www.cmta.net.

CMTA Policy Directors

Michael Shaw

Vice President, Government Relations
(Energy & Tax)

Telephone: 916-498-3328
Email: mshaw@cmta.net

Mike Rogge

Policy Director, Environmental Quality

Telephone: 916-498-3313
Email: mrogge@cmta.net

Nicole Rice

Policy Director, Government Relations (Human Resources, Workforce Development and Tax)

Telephone: 916-498-3322
Email: nrice@cmta.net

Legislative Assistants:

Loretta Macktal - 916-498-3314
lmacktal@cmta.net

Marisa Hull - 916-498-3321
mhull@cmta.net

continued from "Supervisors - the key to an effective safety culture"

- ◆ **WILLINGNESS TO INVESTIGATE** - Investigate and analyze every accident and near miss. Correct the cause. Encourage employees to report minor injuries in order to avoid a possible major injury later. Investigate to correct a safety shortcoming.
- ◆ **COOPERATION** - Supervisors must cooperate with others in the organization who are actively concerned with preventing accidents. Their combined purpose will keep employees healthy and on the job.

Accident prevention reduces human suffering, time and monetary loss, and an accident that never occurs has no cost. From a practical standpoint it is just good business. Make sure your supervisors are safety ready.



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MANUFACTURERS
& TECHNOLOGY
ASSOCIATION



1115 Eleventh Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-3819
(916) 498-3340

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1115 Eleventh Street
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Editor: Andy Viglietti
aviglietti@cmta.net
(916) 498-3340

Assistant: Renee Blatt
rblatt@cmta.net
(916) 498-3342

Email: cmtasource@cmta.net

Fax: (916) 441-5449

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