

# RiskTopics

## Safety leadership & teamwork

Safety leadership can boost teamwork and support safety and health throughout your organization to achieve outstanding results.

### Introduction

In many companies, well intentioned managers who strive to create a safe work environment to protect their most vital resource – their employees - encounter safety teamwork gaps or obstacles. Let's consider key safety leadership elements that may help you to diagnose and plan to enhance teamwork and results.

### Discussion

As we review these elements, consider these items as part of an evaluation checklist to help you identify gaps and prioritize needs to help you develop objectives within your safety leadership action plan to move forward to enhance safety teamwork and results. Key elements include:

- Direction
- Safety Policy
- Accountability
- Training
- Safety observation
- Self-assessment
- Accident investigation
- Return to work
- Measurement, analysis and scorecard

## Guidance

**Direction:** The first element is the safety direction and communication that you've provided to establish a strong safety culture. Top management direction should be communicated through safety policies, defining expectations and responsibilities help to cultivate a strong safety culture to foster understanding, commitment and active participation by all employees.

**Safety Policy:** The safety program's foundation is built upon management support. A safety policy can help to communicate management support to enhance your safety culture, maintain programs and controls at high-optimum levels. An effective policy has the ability to set the tone for a safe work environment, and provide direction by defining top management expectations to clarify objectives for supervisors and front-line teammates to work toward achieving.

**Accountability:** Defining clear expectations and direction helps to enhance safety teamwork so that everyone "puts their hands on the rope" to pull together and support cohesive efforts. A strong safety culture with everyone committed helps ensure that at-risk behaviors and unsafe conditions are continuously spotted and corrected as encountered. Clear responsibilities need to be defined within your safety policy, within your safety committee purpose, as well as within your job descriptions and performance review program.

**Safety Committee:** A safety and health committee is a group that works with management to help with and advise on matters of safety and health as they relate to company operations. The committee performs essential monitoring, educational, investigative and evaluation tasks. A successful committee has a defined purpose, clearly identified staffing and structure, and, perhaps most importantly, it has management's support while carrying out its responsibilities. Key functions include:

- Develop safety policies to control identified hazards.
- Identify unsafe conditions and practices through regular safety inspections. Discuss and determine controls and corrective action for deficiencies identified.
- Submit corrective actions to management and follow-up on the results. Work to obtain positive results.
- Identify training needs and determine whether to use internal or external resources. Types of training can include first aid, accident investigation and hazard communication.
- Review accidents; determine causes, corrective actions and preventive measures.
- Communicate activities of the safety and health committee to employees, supervisors and management.
- Enlist the aid of all employees to help the committee prevent accidents and determine preventive measures.
- Help management evaluate the committee's suggestions for improvement by describing the benefits of loss cost reduction.
- Provide incentive and education to employees for "off job" safety practices around their homes and in recreational activities.

**Training:** Training is a key investment in your most vital resource – your people. Safety orientation training is essential at the time of hire to help ensure that the new employee is trained and fully understands your company's safety policy, expectations, regulatory and job-specific requirements. Carefully review your safety orientation program to ensure that key elements are covered:

- Safety policy
- Safety rules and requirements
- Regulatory programs
- Job specific – best practices, safe work methods
- Safety responsibilities
- Teamwork and safety committee interaction

Safety training is essential at the time of hire and also, training should be provided at regular intervals. OSHA provides guidance on refresher training for regulatory required programs. It's also wise to conduct retraining whenever new equipment, new or changed work methods or chemicals are introduced or an event occurs. Training can be provided to groups, one-to-one retraining after an "event" (safety observation, incident, accident or near miss) or on-line.

Consider the varied delivery methods that help you to train so that best – safe work practices are always used. To help ensure that best – safe work practices are consistently used, conduct follow-up safety observations once training has been provided to ensure that the employee consistently applies safe work practices taught within the training program. Use a safety matrix or on-line system to help you track training programs and upcoming training sessions – due dates.

**Safety Observation:** Safety observations sometimes referred to as behavior based safety is a practice aimed at observing employee work practices to help ensure that safe – best work practices are used. The goals of safety observations are:

- Spot and correct at-risk behaviors
- Reinforce corrected behaviors
- Recognize and reinforce safe behaviors
- Eliminate at-risk behaviors
- Prevent losses
- Build teamwork

Ideally, safety observations should be regularly completed by supervisors. Front-line employees can also be trained to complete them to spread teamwork and overall involvement in your safety programs. As highlighted above, safety observations should be completed following initial orientation and any training activity as well as following an event to ensure that SOP's, safe work methods are fully understood and always used.

**Self-Assessment:** Self-assessment is another key element that helps to ensure that your safety culture, programs and defined expectations are helping you to achieve desired results. Self-inspections can be completed on a more frequent basis and reviewed during safety committee meetings so that unsafe conditions and at-risk actions are corrected and, that the corrections - aimed at the root causes - remain in

place to prevent recurrence. Audits are usually more comprehensive and are meant to more fully assess each aspect for in-depth insight on gaps and priorities in order to set meaningful action plans to address them.

**Accident Investigation:** Accident investigation is a critical, post event element to help you diagnose the root causes of an event. Investigations should be completed as soon as possible, follow a consistent, best investigation protocol and should be reviewed with the safety committee to ensure that lessons are shared and benefit all throughout your organization. Ideally, all incidents should be investigated including near misses. Often, a number of near misses occur prior to a more serious occurrence. Investing the time to spot, investigate, determine root causes and properly address it at its earliest stage helps to prevent its more serious potential outcome.

**Return-to-Work:** It is important to have a policy which includes employee screening, functional job demands and return to work programs. From a return to work perspective, it's critical as part of a strong safety culture and teamwork environment to return your workers back to work as soon as possible. What efforts have you invested to ensure that each employee has the strength and flexibility to safely perform the key job functions? Have you worked to continuously improve key jobs through ergonomics assessment, JSA – job safety analysis review and work methods improvements? Do you ensure that your supervisors are well trained to coach and correct at-risk behaviors to strengthen teamwork and injury prevention? When injuries occur, it's ideal to already have a listing of transitional jobs that injured, recuperating employees can return to work. When an employee is injured, it's critical to maintain strong, continued communication to support and help return the teammate back to work as soon as possible.

A return-to-work program should include the following key elements:

- Develop physical job demands (PJD's)
- Assess ergonomics risk factors
- Modify jobs to develop safer work methods – JSA's are important training tools
- Partner with a Zurich PPO medical service provider – see Zurich's CARE Directory

[Zurich C.a.r.e.® Directory Online](#)

- Develop transitional RTW positions to speed employee team-mate return to work

**Measurement & Scorecards:** Setting clear performance targets and communicating timely results is a key element. Ideally the scorecard and communication strategy needs to fit within your safety environment, communication and overall culture that you've created. In considering what indicators to capture – ensure that leading indicators are tracked as well as lagging indicators. Often, companies focus primarily on lagging indicators such as injury – incidence rates. Its best, within a positive safety culture and environment to focus on the preventative aspects that can be set as key performance, leading-indicators that cut near misses, incidents and accidents. Here is a listing of a KPI's (key performance indicators) that you can include in your scorecard:

- Training completed
- Tool box talks
- Coaching, correction and safety observations

- Safety committee meetings and actions
- Self-inspections and audits
- Injury rates and targets

As the elements of your scorecard deserve attention and consideration also, focus on how you communicate ongoing performance levels to achieve superior results. Providing up-to-date electronic or printed scorecards of KPI's at regular intervals can help to stimulate safety teamwork.

**Loss Analysis:** Zurich has loss analysis tools to support your risk management programs. The RECAT loss analysis provides up to date data for current claims, injuries and incurred costs. The REFAB analysis tool provides same point in time comparative data. Both tools are comprehensive and provide a multitude of loss analysis perspectives to analyze your data to help you identify key needs from which you can initially develop specific goals and targets within your action plan for follow-up loss analysis and performance evaluation. Working with Zurich's Claims Services group, you can initially set-up customized site codes that support your performance and accountability measurement system targets.

**Zurich Management Safety Culture Assessment:** Zurich Risk Engineering's Management Safety Culture Assessment that can help you assesses all of these areas. In addition, this tool and process can help you focus upon the behaviors of managers and senior leaders. Zurich's Management Safety Culture Assessment model highlights the patterns of behavior exhibited by organizational leaders that showcase safety and health performance. See the Zurich Resource Management Safety Culture assessment and communicate with your Zurich Risk Engineering Consultant if you are interested in considering or scheduling an assessment within your company.

## Conclusion

Within this topic on Safety Leadership & Teamwork, we have reviewed many elements to support a strong safety culture. The ultimate purpose is to support your continuous efforts to create and maintain a vibrant, positive safety culture that supports continuous improvement and all of your team working toward achieving superior results that ultimately protects your most vital asset – your people. See the references below for a listing of Zurich Resources to support your efforts in developing and refining key areas highlighted within this topic.

## References

1. Zurich Marketing Brochure – RECAT
2. Zurich Risk Topics –
3. Developing an Effective Loss Control Program
  - Company Safety Policy
  - Zurich Risk Topic – Accident Investigation Matters
  - Company safety policy
  - Establishing a positive safety culture
  - Introduction to job safety analysis
  - Near miss reporting

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