SAFETY LEADERSHIP – GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Over the past ten years, it has become abundantly clear that it is certain behaviours that lead people into having accidents. Therefore, it makes sense for leaders to act in ways that help overcome these behavioural causes. To be concise I’ve grouped the safety leadership actions under the four behavioural causes and kept explanation to a minimum. I’ll give some additional comments in the summary at the end of this briefing.

***Lack of awareness - just not seeing things***

Leadership actions

- Insist on more thorough risk assessments and toolbox talks – generic assessments are not good enough nor is the supervisor and one or two others doing them and then “explaining” it to the troops.
- Instruct more fully even if more experienced people might be offended
- Walk the job with people and point out the potential hazards
- Include awareness building exercises in toolbox talks and safety meetings (use safety alerts more effectively – make people think – don’t just read them out)
- Seek out and scrap bureaucracy – paperwork and meetings. Release people’s awareness so it can be directed to the physical tasks.

***Pressure from supervisors/managers***

You can’t escape from this by saying that most pressure is perceived pressure because perception is reality.

Leadership actions

- Consult on targets at the beginning of a job and as it progresses
• Don’t allow pressure from management to “flow downhill”. If you know there’s a problem right at the start don’t struggle – seek help from your boss
• Notice the signs of pressure and then ask why
• Keep explaining and showing how there is no unreasonable pressure
• Show that you do listen and explain why people’s ideas have not be taken on board
• Set the example by slowing things down and stopping when necessary
• Think about the way you speak and your body language. Maybe, without knowing it you intimidate people and they don’t want to argue or ask questions.

***Natural Human Fears***
Safety Briefing No 1 dealt with the cause of fear in detail so here are just six additional pointers.

Leadership actions
• Notice when people look worried/afraid and asking what is bothering them
• Keep on stressing that people don’t get into trouble for standing up for safety.
• Keep on reminding people that real competence is getting the job done safely.
• Keep on stress that in this day and age people are not fired and not marked as “not-required-back” for stopping jobs
• Go out of your way to praise people extensively and in public when they stop jobs for safety
• Resist the urge to belittle people when they make a safety mistakes. For example, don’t go over the top for minor first aid cases – it makes people feel stupid

***Losing concentration***
There are many causes for a person’s mind not being on the job -worried over personal problems, over-tired, complacency, familiar, over-eager, not caring, over-happy.

Leadership actions
• Be aware of the signs – continual distressed look on face, people not being their usual self – unusually quiet or irritable and ask why.
• If there is an issue distracting someone encourage talking to get it “off his chest” and if necessary postpone difficult jobs
• Build “possibility of losing concentration” into risk assessments and tool box talks
• Watch out for tiredness and ask if it is a problem and take steps to allow sleep
• Make sure people are rotated during long, routine or tedious jobs

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In Summary
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GET YOUR COPY of the e-Report that give 52 suggestions for enhancing your safety leadership, including ways to help your people overcome the six behavioural traps. You’ll find that:
1. You are doing much of this already -instinctively. It’s good to know you are doing the right things.
2. There is a way to pace yourself – how to take just a couple of actions a week and work on those. This link takes you there: http://www.safetyimprovers.com/e-reports/safety-leadership/

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