



White Paper – How to create an Effective Safety Program

- Heavy Industry
- Remote Workplaces
- Drilling Rigs
- Workover Units

History: Your Company probably has an accident problem. That is the only reason you would read an article like this. This problem will drastically raise your workers Compensation Insurance rates and you run the risk of being embroiled in a lengthy and costly lawsuit. Your problem may be a brain teaser because you have probably tried everything they tell you to do to solve it. Here are the things you've tried:

Safety Bonuses: Your employees get a check each month or quarter for working safely.

Why it doesn't work: It's impersonal! That is the only reason. You are already paying them to work safely. Their wages are high enough to buy their own color TV's. What they want is some attention & recognition (more on this later). Ultimately safety bonus programs become a political weapon anyway. One accident and someone loses a safety bonus – negative feelings pervade and we are focused on the negative. Learn to be forgiving toward responsible employees. Fire the irresponsible ones.

Safety Inspections: Monthly safety inspections with pass/fail consequences.

Why it doesn't work: Don't quit Safety Inspections but quit expecting that to solve your accident problem. Safety inspections usually create an "us against them" mentality. We inspect operations, fail them, and then take away their safety bonuses. They in turn hate the safety program and especially the safety people.

Aren't we all working for the same company? You need to treat your employees like they are capable of handling responsibility. Tell them that they are responsible for producing 1 good safety inspection per well. Convert your safety department into a service department (more on this later).

Training: You probably have a minimal amount of training taking place. You may even have monthly or weekly safety meetings. While this is good it is probably not as effective as you had hoped.

What doesn't work about it: It is not enough! Plain and simple. It should be obvious. Your "trainers" may be busy but they can't reach everybody in time to keep pace with the turnover. You don't have enough trainers or enough training taking place.

What Works?

If you have read this far then I have probably struck a cord and/or you really want to solve this issue. I am going to outline a method that I have proven to work and how to implement it into your company immediately. You should see results in a very short period if you do it right.

#1 Take away their safety bonus program – and replace it with giveaways. Raise their wages to replace it initially. That's right. Give your safety department a large budget to purchase hats, cool looking safety glasses, jackets and boots. Tell the safety department to give this stuff out like candy. Contact your Work Comp carrier and make them determine your annual cost for accidents. Give the safety department ¼ of that for their budget. A rule of thumb is \$34,000 for each accident you have had (this is because it raises your insurance for the next 3 years).

#2 The company CEO should directly retrain the safety department. Make them understand that we are no longer negative based safety and that the safety department will become good-will ambassadors for the company. It is now their responsibility to figure out ways to reward the employees for good behavior. The safety people need minimal excuses to “catch the employees doing something “safe” and reward them. Generate certificates of accomplishment. Have BBQ's and award dinners. Which rigs did you have this year who did not get stuck in the hole? Did you reward them? Shake their hands and thank them? That is what they want!

#3 Convert your safety department into a Service Department – Make them carry fire extinguishers, first aid supplies, safety glasses, etc. Your safety people should be helping the rigs pass inspection, not failing them. If you have a bunch of hazards documented in failed inspections then you have a treasure trove for opposing attorneys in a lawsuit, not to mention fodder for OSHA.

#4 Hire an HR person/recruiter. Get an older, wiser person who will spend time screening potential employees. Create a list your Drillers/Operators can hire from. Allow them to recommend employees for the screening process.

#5 Create an effective New Employee Orientation – Show them pictures/video of what it is like to work there whether in the wind, rain, sleet, snow, ice, etc. Make it tough. Try to run off as many applicants as you hire. Get the opinion of your HR person. Make the hiring process longer. There is a book available at www.GraphicSafety.com called Roughneck Safety Training (RST) Workbook and/or Oilfield Safety Training (OST) Workbook. Give it to the candidate to fill out and bring back before hiring them. Have the HR guy grade it and form his opinion of the employee partly by the answers. This way, the day you hire them you will be (mostly) in compliance with OSHA. Don't hire the ones that flunk. Help the ones that are illiterate. Have them speak the answers and you write it down for them. Encourage them to learn how to read.

#6 Drug test them – Establish a zero tolerance for Meth. 1 failure and they can never return to your company. See my article on “Single Strike Meth Rule”. Drug test them regularly.

#7 Establish More Training – Don't hire more trainers. Teach your Supervisors to be trainers.

These are their guys anyway. Get serious and have those debates between safety and operations. Weigh each issue carefully and then send everybody out to speak the same message. Do not be afraid of change. Innovate. There is a roughneck training program available at www.GraphicSafety.com called Roughnecking 101 (R-101) Workbook. Drillers can use it right now to train the employees the right way.

#8 Re-Engineer your workplace – buy Man-riders, the best fall protection gear, spring loaded trip slips, etc. for every rig. Go ahead and make their workplace a more convenient place to work. Convenience = Safety. This is an expensive rout. Do this slowly, carefully. Debate every issue.

The Premise – Psychologists will tell you that men work primarily for self esteem and secondarily for money for family and toys (in that order). Do things that build their self esteem. Glad-hand every employee. Tell them how much you appreciate them working at night, in the cold etc. Thank them for making your living. That is all they want – to be appreciated. If you do these things you will spend a lot less than if you ignore it, continue to pay out Work Comp claims and risk lawsuits. Everyone pays for safety. However, it is more cost-effective to pay it up-front than on the back end. Your stock-holders will thank you.

Wade Rohloff
Safety Consultant / Publisher
Compliance Services
www.GraphicSafety.com