

August 2008

Ten of Dr. E. Scott Geller's basic strategies for encouraging better acceptance and active involvement in behavior-based safety:

1. Watch your language, use language people can relate to as human beings who think and feel, and who like to believe they have dignity, freedom and personal control;
  2. Take advantage of the competence motive;
  3. Make feedback a positive experience;
  4. Distinguish smart goals from purpose;
  5. Elevate self-efficacy and response-efficacy;
  6. Sell outcome and expectancy with personal testimonies;
  7. Teach theory and principles before procedure;
  8. Use process measures of safety performance;
  9. Look beyond the numbers;
  10. Build and maintain momentum.
- For more background information on behavior-based safety, read **"How to Get More People Involved in Behavior-Based Safety: Selling an Effective Process"** by Dr. E. Scott

# Risk Services Notes

## Safety Is An Attitude

According to the National Safety Council, there are approximately 75 million work days lost annually through workers' compensation claims. Businesses can install safe equipment, develop safety programs and preach workplace safety, but accidents still occur.

Accidents often occur due to people cutting corners, taking unnecessary risks and ignoring safe workplace procedures. The disturbing fact is that the leading cause of on-the-job injuries is unsafe behavior.

Since installing safe equipment and incessantly talking about workplace safety isn't enough, there must be another reason why employees are still being injured. It appears that a individual's behavior, more than safety precautions, dictates workplace safety. The behavior-based safety concept has been around since the 1970s but didn't gain popularity until the 1990s.

Behavior-based safety focuses on the "at risk behavior" that will produce an accident or near miss, rather than trying to correct a problem after an accident or occurrence. The behavior-based aim then, is to change the mindset of an employee by altering his mentality to make safety a priority.

Dr. E. Scott Geller, a professor at Virginia Tech University, believes what we do in our lives is influenced by external and internal forces. Unfortunately, it is far more difficult and costly to define our internal predispositions than it is to alter our external conditions. This is the reason why we often attempt to alter our workplace environment when behavior change is called for.

Employees can be threatened to do the right thing with negative consequences. Negative penalties tends to influence behavior, yet create a mindset that causes the employee to work just to avoid failure. The behavior-based safety approach teaches the use of positive reinforcement to support behavior. This creates a mentality where the employee wants to achieve and strives to succeed.

The main focus of behavior-based safety is to alter the safety attitude within an organization. A behavior-based safety program dedicates itself to employees who are the most likely to be injured due to unwise decisions.

Increased safety and fewer injuries are not the only reason to consider a behavior-based safety program. Along with reduced workplace accidents, increases in productivity lead to rising growth in the value of a company. The improvements may be qualitative, such as better morale, or quantifiable, such as improved production. The possibilities with a behavior-based safety program are quite impressive, yet there are four conditions that must be met:

- There has to be a dedicated commitment from management. The change in mindset has to start at the top, and has to be displayed in every facet of what senior management does in order for this program to take effect.
- Any and all hazards have to be designed out of, or reduced as much as possible from, equipment and processes prior to the success of the program.
- The success of the safety program includes decision making from both management and employees.
- The necessary time and resources must be allocated to properly train people and to perform the essential routine job observations.

It is important to note that a behavior-based safety program should never be used as the only means of safety in any workplace. It should be used in conjunction with other loss prevention methods to achieve workplace safety and claim dollar reductions.

This article was written and/or compiled by Cody Whelan, FSU intern at the Division of Risk Management.

Please see the attached poster provided by the National Safety Council. You can visit their Web site at <http://nsc.org/>.

# SAFETY

**Has No  
Quitting  
Time**



# SEGURIDAD

**no tiene  
hora de  
parar**

