

Ensuring Accountability at all Levels

Idea #1 - Create an incentive structure that promotes and rewards safety processes not just outcomes

Companies may create a disincentive to report incidents if workers, supervisors, and crews are rewarded for achieving a low recordable injury rate. This sends mixed messages about whether safety is valued compared to productivity and other company requirements. Mixed messages can lead to confusion and damage the trust between employees and management necessary to achieve a positive safety climate. A better approach is to recognize and reward employees for identifying, reporting, and eliminating hazards. An on-line incident reporting system could be developed that employees would use to notify management when an incident or close call is reported. An “action list” could be placed in a prominent location to show how issues are being addressed and who was rewarded for identifying the hazard. This creates a climate that reinforces the idea that employee contributions for implementing safety are valued.



Idea #2 - Develop, distribute, and implement written safety policies

Written safety policies should clearly describe expectations, roles, and responsibilities for establishing and maintaining a positive jobsite safety climate. The policies should be developed through a joint effort of affected staff and be signed by the owner. The policies should be distributed to and reviewed with all employees, incorporated into the company’s safety manual, and be reinforced verbally on a daily basis.



Idea #3 - Conduct blame-free incident investigations

Cursory investigations of incidents that seek to blame, rather than learn, hamper the development of a positive safety climate and the free flow of information. Such investigations can generate a climate of fear among employees that often leads to under- or non-reporting of potential hazards, close calls, and injuries. While underreporting may improve a company’s safety record, it does not lead to a stronger safety climate and may weaken it. First-line supervisors need training on how to conduct blame-free incident and close call investigations. Companies should try hard to find the root cause of all incidents by examining the possible contributing environmental, organizational, and human factors. Mechanisms must be implemented to share findings throughout the company.



Idea #4 - Incorporate safety leadership into supervisor evaluations

A supervisor’s annual performance evaluation should emphasize his/her leadership skills with respect to safety. A competency-based scale (like the one above) could be developed that lays out the expectations for poor to superior performance. The scale would contain leadership behaviors such as the supervisor’s ability to empower employees to identify hazards and stop work if necessary, report incidents, and participate in blame-free incident investigations. Competency-based scale evaluation data can be gathered by asking employees directly about on-site safety leadership and by observational methods. Strengths and weaknesses identified in the evaluation should be discussed with supervisors so improvement goals can be developed.

