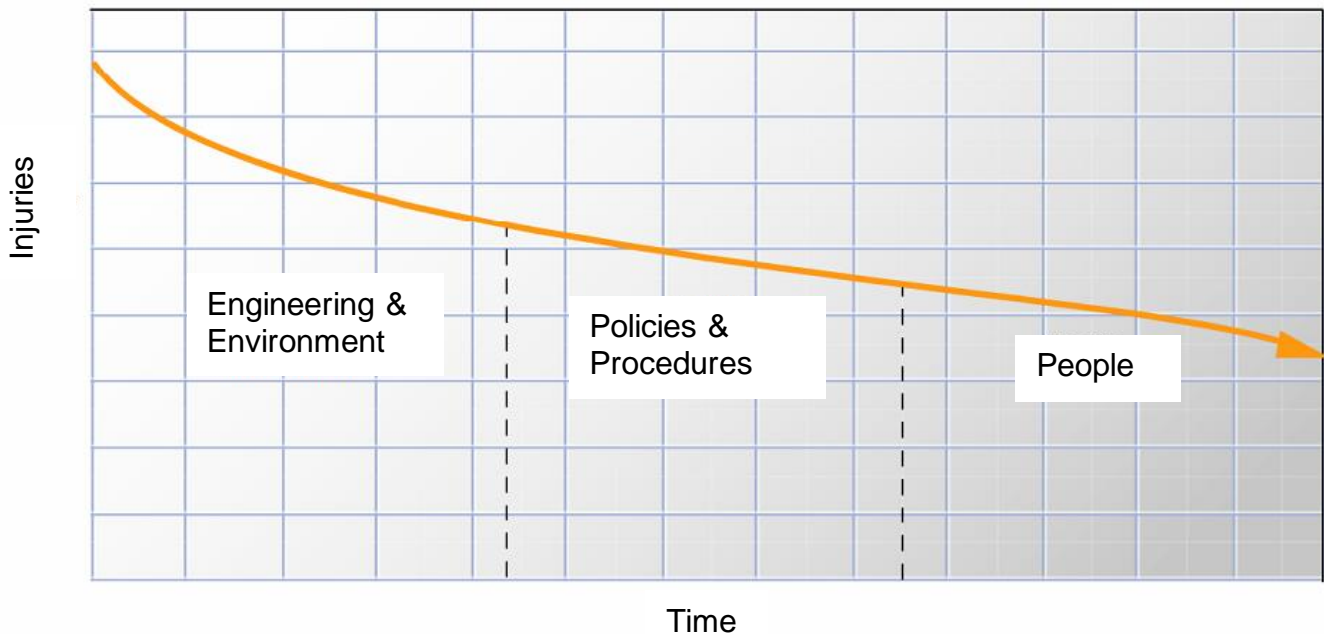


Safety and You for Supervisors

You as a supervisor shape the culture in which you work by your actions – that is, by what you do and say. You can even affect the culture by what you do not do. For example, if you notice an employee not wearing the proper personal protective equipment, don't ignore it. Stop and address the situation. However, a supervisor is NOT a watchdog trying to catch employees doing something wrong. It is important for a positive culture to provide feedback for doing things right.

Evolution of Safety Performance

Supervisors address all three aspects of safety – the engineering and environment, the policies and procedures, and the people.



1. **Engineering and the environment.** Eliminate as many hazards as possible in the workplace and working environment. Address environmental exposures with appropriate engineering controls to reduce injuries and potential injuries.
2. **Policies and procedures.** After addressing engineering and environmental concerns, develop and implement policies, procedures and management systems to ensure safe work practices that prevent accidents and injuries. When the necessary policies and procedures are in place and employees have been trained on them and are using them effectively, injuries and potential injuries should reduce further.
3. **People.** The actions and attitudes of people operating within and around our work environment determine safety performance.

Common Reasons for Risks

Even with engineering controls, safe working environments, and effective policies and procedures, we still encounter employee injury and even death. People don't want to get hurt, so why do they take risks?

1. Workplace conditions encourage at-risk behavior. Equipment may be hard to use safely. Personal protective equipment (PPE) may be awkward-fitting or ill-maintained. Workers may feel pressured to get the job done "at any cost."

2. They are unaware the behavior is at-risk. They may not have been trained, don't receive reminders, and there may not have been a previous incident from unsafe actions. As a supervisor, communicate about safety (post and share safety-related information, hold team meetings to discuss safe behavior, begin each day with a toolbox or tailgate talk, have pre-task planning discussions before any high-risk task). If you are not reinforcing safety, you are allowing workplace experience to define safe and acceptable work practices. Continually reinforce safe ways of working, hazards and shortcuts to avoid.
3. Natural rewards and punishments usually favor unsafe behavior. Risky shortcuts offer a natural reward by usually being faster, more convenient and more comfortable. They rarely results in injury on any single occasion. It's human nature to take the risk when rewards are virtually certain and the risk is low.

How to Use Rewards Versus Discipline

Potential disadvantages of discipline include:

- Tends to focus on an individual's actions rather than the reason they act as they do
- No employee buy-in
- Usually not consistent
- Injured people are punished by the injury AND further discipline
- People don't like to deliver it and don't like to receive it
- At best, only affects behavior when the boss is watching; at worst, not at all
- Is a negative approach to safety – supervisors are looking for people doing something wrong

Discipline produces:	Reward produces:
Minimal compliance	Extra effort
Bad feeling	Good feelings
Low morale	High morale

Only use discipline as a last resort when you determine that there is no underlying issue (training, equipment availability, process, etc.) that caused the unsafe action or inaction. Follow company policy and enforce the discipline.

Corrective, negative or judgmental comments make a heavy impact. Studies show that as many as five to seven positive remarks are needed to offset the sting of one negative comment. You want your employees to feel like they can approach you. You want to promote more effective interactions between you and your employees. Without effective feedback and worker involvement, behaviors are not likely to change. Supervisors want to increase the number of safe behaviors and eliminate at-risk behaviors. Ask *why* people act unsafely to determine underlying problems (training, equipment availability, processes, etc.).

Managing the Human Element in Safety

Managing the human element in safety simply means helping people perform their jobs more safely. It means better performance, higher morale and increased profitability for your company.

As a supervisor, you interact directly with employees, setting the tone for what does and what does not occur. Employees will look to your efforts to determine if the company cares about their safety. You provide a visible management commitment to safety. One way to maintain a good relationship with employees is for supervisors to accept ownership and not blame unpopular safety rules on upper management or the safety department.

Just as you are accountable for production or performance, you are accountable for the safety and well-being of your employees. Measure and reward safety activities that help to prevent incidents and injuries.

Shaping Safety Culture Through Safety Leadership

Integrate safety into business planning and decision-making, and challenge business decisions that may negatively impact safety now or in the future. Know how to manage operational hazards and intervene as necessary to uphold requirements.

Show your support by leading and actively participating in safety meetings, audits, incident investigations and incident investigation reviews, programs, and campaigns.

Act as a role model for reporting and addressing safety issues.

Create opportunities to talk with employees. Make sure that they know about potential hazards and your commitment to safety rules. Get to know their concerns and stay visible to stay informed about operational realities.

Steps to Improve Safety

- Clearly define and consistently enforce safety rules
- Set a good safety example
- Identify and correct physical and operational safety hazards
- Conduct accident and near miss investigations
 - Use the 5-Whys or another investigative approach to get to the root cause of the issue to prevent future problems
- Supply the necessary resources
 - Budget for maintenance
 - Buy necessary equipment and PPE
 - Allot time for safety meetings
- Conduct daily safety meetings
- Invest money in safety improvements
- Give employees a part to play in safety
 - Engage employees in safety efforts
 - Help them participate in safety improvements
 - Provide volunteer time for safety initiatives and safety committees
 - Ask for input on how to perform tasks safely
 - Ask for suggestions and follow up on their ideas
- Communicate regularly about safety
 - Talk one-on-one with employees about safety and discuss safety in regular work group meetings
 - Review safety and injury statistics

- Reinforce safe actions
 - Verbal praise works best
 - Deliver positive feedback (praise) five to seven times more frequently than constructive feedback
- Correct at-risk actions or inaction
 - Provide corrective feedback in a positive, helpful way
- Help all employees comply with safety rules and procedures
- Recognize that, when employees identify and correct safety hazards, the stage is set for safety success

How to Effectively Provide Corrective Feedback

Frequent and timely praise delivered when praiseworthy work is done is best.

To give supportive, positive feedback:

- Give praise directly to the employee as soon as possible after the behavior
- Identify specific safe behavior rather than using general statements
- Look for and praise:
 - Extra effort (more time and trouble to do the task safely)
 - Improvement
 - Consistently safe behavior

Regular at-risk behavior guarantees injuries will occur. The only way to prevent injuries is for everyone to work safely all the time. Provide feedback about at-risk behavior in a positive, constructive way that leaves your employee feeling helped, not criticized. To effectively provide feedback:

- Provide positive feedback one-on-one, praise publicly
- Focus on specific at-risk behavior, not attitude or personality
- Discuss, don't accuse or lecture
- If needed, teach how to do it safely
- Have the employee demonstrate the safe behavior, then give praise
- Ask for a commitment to do it the "safe way" next time
- Show your concern

Remain Positive

Feedback given constructively with intentions to be helpful may be met with defensiveness. Don't give in, but don't argue. If you can't think of a good response, walk away and plan how to handle it next time.

Keep your own emotions under control.

If your employer has a **safety director**, he or she will support your performance of these activities by training you, monitoring your performance, and so on. The supervisor is accountable for the activities listed above, NOT the safety director.

Examples of Ineffective and Effective Behaviors to Promote a Safety Culture

Ineffective Actions	Effective Actions
Harmful Actions... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withholds information • Blames workers for problems • Reacts angrily without seeking solutions • Becomes defensive when issues arise 	Helpful Actions... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and informative • Doesn't go back on his/her word • Works hard and is fair • Challenges unsafe conduct
Poor Communication... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees don't know how to voice safety concerns • Doesn't listen to ideas • Threatens retaliation or yells 	Good Communication... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibly present in operating areas • Listens to hear what others are saying vs. listens to speak • Conducts daily safety huddles
Lack of Teamwork... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says things like, "I'm in charge here and you'll do as I say." "You don't need to ask someone else for their opinion." "I'll tell you when something is risky." • Doesn't engage workers to be part of the safety solution • People are confused over their roles, resulting in inaction and lack of accountability 	Sense of Teamwork... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes sure team members know each other and their relative roles • Highlights the importance of working together to improve safety • Asks for input on how to best carry out tasks safely
Poor Role Model... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has others wear personal protective equipment (PPE), but doesn't consistently wear PPE • Thinks having weekly toolbox talks is all that's needed for safety 	Leads by Example... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides needed safety resources • Follows safety rules • Never takes <i>or encourages</i> shortcuts