

Subject: Tips For Raising Safety Awareness

To All:

FYI - From BLR's Safety Daily Advisor at <http://safetydailyadvisor.blr.com/>

Gary

Brainstorm Your Way to Safety Awareness

To be safe, workers need to think safety in everything they do. That's called safety awareness. Here is a technique to get them to more involved in building it.

If you're like many safety professionals, you spend your days (and probably nights, too) working on and thinking about ways to make your workplace safer.

You diligently search for hazards on the job, inspecting facilities, machinery, and processes. You lobby management for equipment with the latest in machine guarding and other engineering controls. And you make sure workers have the best in PPE.

Unfortunately, all of it can come to naught without one thing your workers need to develop: *a sense of safety awareness*.

Safety awareness means building safety into the way your workers think about things.

Without it, workers won't wear their PPE, or won't wear it properly. They won't make full use of the safety features built into their equipment. And they won't observe simple rules, such as those of good housekeeping, that can prevent accidents. In short, absent safety awareness, workers may think about production, their compensation, or tonight's softball game-but not safety.

How do you get them to do so? Today and tomorrow, we'll look at some ways to build that awareness, by involving the target audience in the effort. Let's start with brainstorming.

Brainstorming is a classic idea generation technique, often used to solve problems. Members of a group are asked to toss out ideas and solutions as quickly as they come to mind, with none shot down or spoken against. The ideas are written as a list. That list is later winnowed down to the best ideas, to be acted upon.

Not long ago, some of BLR's editorial talent did some of this kind of thinking. The result was this list (a checklist, actually) for "Instilling Safety Awareness Do's and Don'ts." We suggest that you try brainstorming at your next safety meeting, using our thoughts as a takeoff point with your employees, modifying or adding to these items for your specific situation.

Safety Awareness Do's:

- Treat safety as an important job responsibility.*
- Plan each job before you start.*
- Think about what could go wrong, and how you'll prevent problems and accidents.*
- Use labels, MSDSs, protective clothing, and other safety information and equipment.*
- Keep your work area clear of potential fire, spill, or tripping and falling hazards.*
- Wash thoroughly before eating or drinking.*
- Check tools and equipment before you use them.*
- Select the right tool for the job.*
- Check that ventilation is working.*
- Know and follow company rules.*
- Pay attention to what you're doing.*
- Know what to do in an emergency.*
- Ask questions when you're unsure of what to do or how to do it.*

Safety Awareness Don'ts:

- Eat, drink, or smoke in the work area (not smoking at all is even better).*
- Use a malfunctioning tool or machine. Tag it and report it.*
- Work on hazardous jobs, such as tasks in confined spaces, without a buddy.*
- Ignore a safety hazard; either fix it or report it.*
- Ignore other workers' unsafe practices; correct them or report them.*
- Let others talk you into bypassing safety procedures.*
- Take shortcuts.*
- Fool around.*

We're sure other professionals would be interested in what your workers add to these lists. Feel free to use the *Share Your Comments* button to let them know. Meanwhile, in the next *Advisor*, we'll offer more tips to build safety awareness.

In the [last Advisor](#), we began exploring ways to build safety awareness into your workers' thought patterns ... to get

them to think about doing things safely as well as quickly, accurately, or with a reward in mind.

One way was to engage workers in groupthink exercises, such as *safety brainstorming*, in which they come up with safety ideas as a team. Experts agree this is a far stronger way to involve them than in a traditional one-way communication, such as a lecture. The ideas are also "owned" by those who generate them, as opposed to being imposed by an outside source. They are, therefore, more likely to be respected.

We illustrated how this works here at BLR with a resultant checklist of [safety awareness do's and don'ts](#). Now, here are other ideas for imbuing workers with safety awareness, some from the National Federation of Independent Business website, *nifb.com*.

--Develop a Safety Manual. This book given to new workers on day one, says NIFB, should "pool safety information from department managers, equipment and tool manufacturers, and workplace safety experts," and should include "startup and lockdown procedures, types of activity to avoid at work, and proper attire for operating equipment."

--Name a Safety Champion. This idea calls for naming one employee in each work area to research and report on safety at regular safety or department meetings. It's often amazing how workers take to this responsibility. At one organization we know, the safety coordinator, as he's called, subscribes to safety magazines and continually contacts safety organizations to bring his co-workers the best and latest information. The gratitude he receives from colleagues is his only payment for this work.

--Hold a Safety Event. Let employees plan and carry out safety demonstrations or create exhibits for these events, which can be either freestanding or part of larger company gatherings. NIFB adds that this as an ideal time to hold contests or distribute safety awards. Guest speakers may also be requested from vendors or safety or trade associations.

--Build Safety into Employee Communications. In every employee contact-from daily e-mails to paycheck stuffers to newsletters-safety should be stressed. In fact, the more focus you put on it, the more it will become a core value for your organization. Don't forget posters ... or how to properly display them. That means locating safety messages so they're not be lost in a sea of EEOC and Wage and Hour announcements. They should get priority placement in the work areas, if possible, and not be covered by other postings as time passes.

You can't train them if they're not "there"

There's another reason safety awareness suffers, especially in high-pressure job environments. (Is there any other kind these days?) It's that, while you put a lot of your effort into training, workers' heads are simply elsewhere. They may feel they're too busy to attend training sessions, or if they do come, their minds may be back at the job.

The secret to beating this syndrome is *high impact training ... concise, information-packed messages in very little time*.

Gary Jones
 Printing Industries of America
 Graphic Arts Technical Foundation
 200 Deer Run Road
 Sewickley, PA 15143
 P: 412/259-1794
 F: 412/741-2311

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