

Basic Principles of Safety — Workplace Safety Attitudes

Your objectives:

At the end of the lesson, should be to adequately explain how safety attitudes affect every aspect of work, and why following safety rules consistently and without exception is the most important thing for employees, supervisors, and management staff alike.

Safety is top priority. No compromises to safety will be tolerated. As soon as a safety deficiency becomes apparent or is reported, all efforts to bring the safety level on par with an acceptable range must be made. Two measures for all involved are derived directly from these two principles:

- 1. Safety and compliance with rules concern us all;**
- 2. As soon as a safety deficiency is identified, anyone implicated is obliged to report it at least to supervisor immediately.**

‘Workplace Safety Attitudes’

“Workplace safety attitudes refers to [an] employee[’s] tendency to respond [either] positively or negatively towards a safety goal, idea, plan, procedure, prevention or situation.” (Safeopedia) Safety attitudes influence an employee’s choice of actions and response to challenges, incentives and rewards at the workplace.

Positive workplace safety attitudes are essential for an accident-free work environment that ensures higher efficiency, best quality, saves budget on cost of accident, and raises employee morale, business profit and goodwill.

By the same token, a negative workplace safety attitude increases cost of production and turnover rate, and reduces employee safety, morale, quality, profitability, and business goodwill.

(Adapted from: <https://www.safeopedia.com/definition/721/workplace-safety-attitudes>)

Safety Compliance

Not even the latest and greatest personal protective equipment (PPE) will protect employees unless they are willing to wear it consistently and compliantly. Having a system in place for ensuring that employees understand and adhere to work safety requirements is critical to the

organization's ability to meet the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and safeguard against risk.

What follows (on Page 2) are four ways to ensure employees follow the safety programme as intended.

(Adapted from: <https://ohsonline.com/articles/2018/11/06/safety-compliance-4-strategies-to-get-your-employees-on-board.aspx>)

1. Effective Training

Training is specifically required in many OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) standards. Employees need to know how to comply with programmes in place, and training is the key to bridging the gap between regulations on paper and those carried out in practice.

It is imperative that employees be instructed on when they need to wear the PPE, how to wear it properly, how to inspect it, how to store and care for it, and how to dispose of it properly. Demonstrating how to use the actual equipment and having employees replicate the proper procedures is more effective than any lecture or instructional video.

Management should also constantly evaluate the effectiveness of the current training programme by assessing your employees' knowledge and observing (monitoring) their work practices. If there are any loopholes, it is a sign that a refresher or retraining might be in order. It is also a good idea to retrain your employees whenever new equipment, new hazards or new tasks are introduced to the work environment.

2. Create and enforce clear policies

Effective and clearly communicated safety policies with a corresponding disciplinary programme are crucial to any safety programme. If employees do not know what is expected of them, they cannot be held accountable for any errors they may have occurred.

Disciplinary policies need to be communicated and enforced consistently. The most effective disciplinary programmes tend to be accumulative, with a first offense or minor infraction, earning a mild consequence such as a verbal warning, while severe or repeated disregard for safety can lead to consequences up to and including termination. Disciplinary programmes should be focused on behaviours (e.g. not wearing required PPE) rather than on outcomes (e.g. getting injured) lest employees retaliate and claim injuries and safety hazards.

3. Engage Employees

A strong safety programme is one that has open lines of communication between employees and managers. If safety is addressed solely through a punishment-based model, employees may become reluctant to raise safety concerns or hesitant to ask questions. And since employees will be first to notice and encounter hazards, it is important they gain the trust that they can raise concerns without fear of reprisal, making the workplace a truly safer place.

It is undemanding to write off an associate as being lazy or disobedient, to sound the alarm and to spring to disciplinary action. Far more productive, however, would be to consider all possible motives for an employee who may not be adhering to safety rules, as doing so will foster a better relationship with subordinates and co-workers.

Listen carefully: Is their PPE uncomfortable? Does it get in the way of their workflow? Active listening will incorporate valuable employee insights and therefore will yield a more successful programme.

Furthermore, engaging and involving workers in selecting PPE and giving them some purchasing decisions for safety equipment means they will be more likely to wear it consistently and compliantly.

4. Secure Supervisor Support

Last but not least, supervisors' buy-in is a critical piece in employee compliance. Since supervisors' most frequent and immediate point of contact with management, they have an enormous impact on how employees perceive the importance of safety at the workplace. If supervisors, after all, sent a message that safety did not matter so much or if they themselves do not comply, employees would follow suit.