

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.