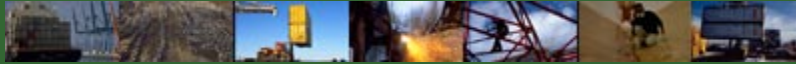




Supervisors' Safety Update

Ideas and Strategies for Leaders



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OFF THE JOB INJURIES AFFECT THE JOB TOO!

By SeaBright Insurance Loss Control

In 2005, nine out of ten deaths, and two thirds of all disabling injuries occurred *off the job* in the U.S. This means an employee in your company has a greater chance of being injured at home or during leisure activities than while at work. Eye-opening figures such as these, reported by the National Safety Council, make it clear that for a company to truly promote safety, the message must affect not only the working hours, but 24 hours a day--whether your valued employee is at home, at play, or in the workplace.

Companies with off-the-job safety programs have found that in addition to an overall reduction in lost-time injuries, these programs have a positive impact on worker morale. Employees appreciate it when management shows concern for their total health and welfare.

Any Accident or Illness Can Affect Production

An experienced employee's absence from work due to any injury or illness affects the overall operation. It can disrupt schedules, lessen the crew's efficiency, reduce the company's production levels, and increase insurance costs. The company budget must absorb the costs and you, the supervisor, must suffer the inconvenience of having capable workers missing from the crew. It doesn't matter if they are injured on or off the job; the crew is still short one person. Other workers, as well as the entire company, are affected by the "indirect costs" incurred when an employee is out on a time loss injury. In 2005 for every one lost day of work due to an on the job accident, there were almost 2.5 lost days due to accidents off the job.

Indirect costs for job-related accidents can range anywhere from \$4 to \$11 for each \$1 of direct accident costs incurred. These hidden expenses may include the costs of replacing and training a new employee during the injured worker's recovery period, reduced productivity of the crew, overtime to make up for lost productivity, and possible project delays. A severe off-the-job injury or illness can also increase the company's group medical plan and disability insurance premiums. In the case of serious incidents, these increases may affect the company-operating budget for years. Total costs for off the job accidents in 2005 were over \$223.7 billion.

On a personal level, just as with jobsite injuries, these events often restrict the employee's recreational activities, harm relationships, and can strain the financial stability of the family. Everyone benefits by preventing mishaps and disruption in an employee's life--whatever the reason or time of day.

What Can Supervisors Do to Help?

Supervisors are key to effectively managing both safety and production on an everyday basis. As a member of the management team, the supervisor is often first to feel the effect of injuries that take crewmembers away from the job. So what can you do to influence what happens to your workers during the 16 hours a day they are not on the job?

You already schedule safety awareness and training into your production operations. You purchase personal protective equipment and materials for the sole purpose of maintaining a safe workplace. You inspect your work areas and make corrections or additions when required. You conduct crew safety meetings on a daily, weekly or monthly basis and participate in the Safety Committee meetings. With these safety activities already in-place, it is a simple matter to include off-the-job safety training within in the safety program.

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When crew meetings include off-the-job safety messages, it helps employees think about accident prevention beyond the workplace. It challenges them to carry home the safe practices and procedures used on the job, and extend this information to their families as well.

Remind Workers to Take Care “Around The Clock”

Show your leadership and concern for those you supervise by broadening your safety and health message. Remind employees that safety is an important and integral part of what is done every day at work, to prevent injuries to themselves and co-workers. Urge them to apply these same practices in their personal and home environment. In addition to personal well being, safe methods practiced off the job will set examples for the rest of the family to follow.

When discussing safety practices that are followed on a daily basis at work, inquire as to whether crewmembers follow the same practices at home—or do they take risks when no one is watching? Do they use the recommended PPE when using oil paints and solvents? Do they use protective gear when operating a chain saw? Have they inspected their electric tools and cords recently, or done a safety inspection of the family vehicle? Do they wash their hands prior to handling food products?

What Off-the-Job Safety Topics Should Be Discussed and Why?

What topics are appropriate for you and the company to advocate, without intruding into employees’ personal life? The answer is easy. Discuss safety issues that are extensions of work or those that show the employee that the company is sincerely concerned for their safety outside of the work environment. Subjects that may be appropriate could include:

Slips, Trips, and Falls. Falls from elevations are the second leading cause of death in the workplace. This cause of injury and death is common despite a national focus on reducing fall exposures. Ladders are used both on and off of the job. As a supervisor, you don’t want a crew member to risk working on a damaged ladder, and you don’t want them to be injured at home fixing their roof or pruning a tree, using poorly maintained equipment. The value of safe, well maintained equipment can be emphasized in many ways. For example, reminders can be given on how important good equipment is to sports activities.

Rock climbing is an excellent example. As rock climbers rope-up and ascend toward the summit of a mountain, they are acutely aware of their skills and the limits of their equipment. Climbers must make the right decision every-time and on every move. Safety for themselves and their climbing partner is the primary factor in every move toward the summit. A successful ascent means the climbers had the experience, the ability, and the correct equipment. To ensure safe climbing, the team inspects its equipment before every outing. The same care should be taken prior to beginning work tasks. Only a fool uses inadequate or damaged equipment.

Fire Prevention and Safety. Regular on-the-job fire prevention concerns include reducing or safeguarding combustibles and flammables, deploying fire extinguishers and developing an emergency evacuation plan. But three-quarters of all fire-related deaths occur in the home. Even fires that do not result in death or injury mean great disruption and stress to a family. Discuss the need to test and replace smoke alarm batteries, and assure the family’s own fire escape plan. Expanding fire safety ideas from work to home is easy and extends your crew’s awareness of this issue at all times.

Driving Safely and Defensively. Good professional drivers practice defensive driving every day, all day. Driving safely and operating equipment carefully is a continual message that is sent to employees who use mobile equipment. But most employees also commute to work daily, and during evenings and weekends are also at high risk for vehicle accidents and injuries. It makes sense to occasionally provide defensive driving messages to all employees. Even an off the job “fender-bender” can have a stressful impact on a person’s emotions and attention to work.

Sanitation and Food Poisoning. Crews who work in the food processing or food service industries are acutely aware of the needs of sanitation both for the equipment they use and their own personal hygiene habits. Over the last several years the E. coli bacteria has become a household name. Passing along the knowledge and safe practices that we provide to employees helps keep their families aware of the hazards and precautions. There are SBIC *Safety Meeting Outlines* providing information on how to avoid these potentially deadly bacteria.

Back Care. For most industries, back strain is the number one cause of time loss incidents. 80% of our society will experience a back injury sometime in their lives. Back care education should be provided for all new employees and periodically during safety meetings. Why not discuss situations at home and during recreation that can weaken or injure back tissues as well as work tasks? Regardless of what causes a back strain, or where it happens, the employee will often be out of commission for a while.

Other Sources of Off-The-Job Safety Messages:

In addition to regular safety meetings, companies can use many other methods to promote safety off the job. Paycheck stuffers can extend messages into the home. Company bulletin boards can include a variety of safety and health information. Magazines and pamphlets produced by vendors and mailed directly to employees' homes helps raise the awareness of the whole family. The options can be as unique as your company, and the results will all be positive.

SeaBright's monthly collection of *Safety Meeting Outlines* also includes topics that are easily adapted or expanded to address off-the-job safety and health. Don't forget to use them.

Help Safeguard Employees the *Other* 128 Hours Each Week.

Employers are responsible for the safety and health of workers one-third of each workday. Companies expend a great deal of time and money to develop a worker who is an asset and contributes to the operation. The loss of experienced personnel through accident or injury makes an impact which can be difficult to measure, but which is often significant.

Individuals, of course, must assure their own and their family's well being the rest of the time—evenings, weekends and during vacations.

Safe habits at work should lead to safe habits after work. Supervisors can support this effort through leadership and education. Smart supervisors realize that off-the-job safety training creates good will and means good business.

Off-The-Job Safety Benefits You, Your Crew, and Your Company!