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SUPERVISORS ARE THE KEY TO SAFETY

By SeaBright Insurance Loss Control

The supervisor is the key person in any program designed to manage safety. As a supervisor, you are responsible for translating management's policies into action and for promoting safety activities with your employees. How successfully you do this may determine to a large extent, whether people go home uninjured to their families at night or not.

You are accountable to both management and society for employees' safety. It is upper management's responsibility to provide you with comprehensive safety training, so the company's safety expectations are fully understood by you.



If you are sincere and enthusiastic about accident prevention, you can actually do more than anyone else in the organization to keep injuries from occurring. Conversely, if you only give lip service to the safety program or ridicule it, that attitude will be transmitted to your crew and offset the effectiveness of the program.

The best way to lead is by setting a good example.

Don't be reluctant to change modes of operation or to accept new safety ideas. Enthusiastically support safety incentives, safety committee projects and other activities used to promote and maintain interest in safety and zero injuries. Your wholehearted support of promotional activities is essential to preventing accidents. As a bonus, having a successful safety program makes your department more profitable, more productive and produce higher quality goods.

The best way to lead is by setting a good example. By following safety & health rules yourself, you promote safety. When you wear safety glasses and other personal protective equipment, you are a living role model that says, "This is important, and I want everyone else to follow my example."

Teaching safety to employees is another important function of supervisors. To be successful in this area, you cannot depend upon safety posters, a few warning signs, or general rules to do your teaching for you. Whether it's the orientation of a new employee orientation or training an experienced worker in job process changes, safety instructions require your personal leadership. You, as the supervisor, have the experience and knowledge to impress upon each employee the important nature of safety. Your *actions* are what others will follow.

Look at the following 4 Point Teaching model. It is called the "4 Point Method" because the instructing job is broken into four parts: Preparation, Presentation, Application, and Testing/Follow-up.

Part One: Preparation

Training of any sort requires preparation to be effective and meaningful for those learning from you. Being prepared for the training gives those you are teaching awareness that this is important and that you consider their time valuable as well.

When teaching adults there are important points that research has told us helps you be successful. These are three simple key points:

- Adults learn best in a friendly atmosphere. Yelling and negative training methods will not get the results you want or need.
- Adults don't like to waste time. Even though your crew may be being paid the same for attending the training, no one wants to feel they are wasting their time. Being prepared shows the workers you value their time as well.
- Adults respond quickly to praise and attention. Everyone likes a pat on the back. Providing positive feedback to attendees is a great way to keep their interest and attention.

The four points to remember in preparing for your training are:

A. *Establish a Training Timetable.* How much skill you expect the employee to have by what date? What are the critical pieces of information that must be retained? What skills must they learn from the training?

B. *Break Down the Job.* List the important steps. Pick out the key points (Remember safety is always a key point). This is essentially a “job hazard analysis” of your training. Determine your needs, what the important bits of information you must ensure everyone walks away with, and what you need to make sure that you succeed at.

C. *Have Everything Ready.* Have the right equipment, materials and supplies. Test any equipment before the meeting to make sure it works. Make sure you have enough materials for everyone in the training.

D. *Have the Workplace Properly Arranged.* Just as the employee will be expected to keep it. Tools in the correct place, equipment maintained guards in place, etc.



Part Two: Presenting the Training Topic, Task or Material

Your actions are what others will follow.

A. Put the worker at ease.

B. Define the job and find out what the employee already knows about it.

C. Get the employee interested in learning the job and place him/her in the correct workstation position.

D. Explain, show, and illustrate each critical job one step at a time. Let the employee repeat the step to make sure they truly understand it. Make an extra effort to stress safety at each key point.

Part Three: Applying What Has Been Learned

A. Have the employee do the job. Carefully watch the process. Make sure to recognize and point out *correct* practices or methods. Praise what is being done correctly.

B. While monitoring the process, correct any errors or unsafe acts that are completed.

C. Now have the worker do the task again. This time, have the workers explain to you each key point, as they complete the work. This includes the safety procedures as the job is done again.

D. As you monitor the task being done, it is your job to make sure that the worker fully understands the job and the associated procedures. Continue repeating the task until you completely believe that they know they know how to do the task on their own.

Part Four: Testing / Follow-Up

A. Put the employee on his/her own. Once you are comfortable that the worker understands the procedures and the equipment, allow them to do the work on their own.

B. Designate who to go to for help. Once they are working independently ensure that the worker knows who they should go to for help or questions.

C. Check frequently and encourage questions. As the supervisor, you must recognize that this worker may not be comfortable at first asking questions, or indicating that they don't understand. Many new workers want to impress the 'boss', and asking questions is looked on by some workers as a negative. So, stop by the workstation and encourage questions.

D. During your follow-up reviews, continue to recognize employees doing the right things.

E. As their skills and safety procedures get solidified at their task, slowly taper off extra coaching and close follow up.



Your actions should be consistently firm and fair. Take every opportunity to exchange ideas on safe processes and accident prevention with employees. You are the most effective person the company has to relay personal reminders to employees on safety and its importance to the company.

The supervisor is truly the key to a great safety program. Approach unsafe conditions and unsafe actions with corrective actions, training, and support as well as good management skills. Your active approach to safety management will reap great rewards including: injury reduction, productivity, quality and retaining skilled personnel.