

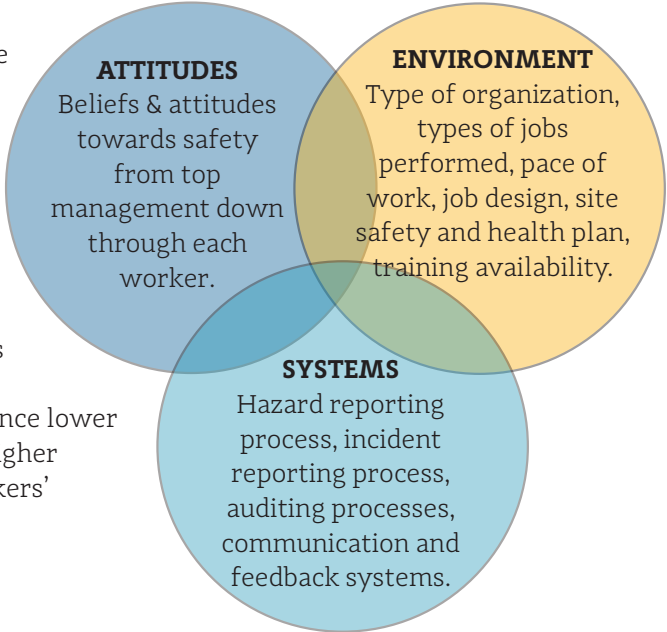


# Improving Safety Culture

Establishing a culture of safety is something that every business should strive to achieve. A positive safety culture should be clearly defined, measured and evaluated on a regular basis. The success of a businesses safety culture requires each and every person in the company to do their part.

## Benefits of a Strong Safety Culture

A strong safety culture has the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process. A company that fosters a safe work environment through a strong safety culture typically experiences fewer at-risk behaviors and experience lower accident rates, lower turn-over, lower absenteeism and higher productivity. This can result in significant savings on workers' compensation insurance costs.



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## Factors that Influence Safety Culture

People are both products and producers of their environment. Any attempt to change people's attitudes without looking at the environment they work in, and the systems they work with, is doomed to fail. Change initiatives need to consider the interrelationship between people, environment and systems.

## Written Safety Program

Most safety programs are designed with the attempt to satisfy all requirements of OSHA standards. This makes the program far too cumbersome to be efficiently deployed on an employee level. In order to be effective at positively changing your culture, your safety program needs to be:

- Minimally complex – something that all the individual employees of your company can remember and take ownership of.
- Effectively able to communicate what safety means to your company.

## Key Safety Program Elements

Improving a safety culture takes time and involves a series of continuous process improvement steps. A true safety culture is achieved when safety becomes an integral part of daily operations. The following ten elements should be included in a safety program:

### 1. Management commitment and employee involvement/ownership

Visible top management commitment to a positive safety culture promotes safety involvement and ownership for employees.

- Management commitment provides the motivating force and resources for organizing and controlling activities within an organization.
- Employee involvement provides the means through which workers develop and express their own commitment to safety.
- Managers/owners need to actively participate in the implementation of the safety program and also in activities such as safety meetings and inspections. Following safety rules demonstrates to employees that safety is important to them.
- Safety must be treated on an equal level with production, performance, quality, etc.
- Employees need to be involved in decisions that affect their safety and health through activities such as participating in training, reporting hazards, and developing or revising safety rules.
- Employees should participate in physical inspections and be encouraged to submit suggestions for improvement.

### 2. Responsibility and Accountability

The inability to adequately define and communicate responsibilities will result in inadequate enforcement and will likely cause the program to fail.

- Written job descriptions and safe work procedures.
- Written safety responsibilities for:
  - Management
  - Supervision
  - Employees
  - Safety Coordinator

### 3. Accident investigation and prompt accident reporting

- Employees should report all accidents and near misses.
- Every incident should be investigated and the results communicated to employees to increase safety awareness.

### 4. Safety training

People who are provided with regular information about safety and health at work are more likely to be mindful of issues and the ways in which their actions can affect themselves and others.

- New employees should receive safety orientation within three days of hire.
- Avoid “annual training” and maintain a regular schedule of safety trainings and safety committee meetings to keep safety fresh in the minds of all employees.
- Provide training in skills, safety rules and methods, and safety responsibilities.

**5. Understand the role of safety coordinator**

- Everyone has safety responsibility – the coordinator is just a coach.
- Safety coordinator must have decision-making authority.

**6. Documentation and enforcement of safety procedures and rules**

- Employees must be held accountable for written rules and procedures.
- Use positive reinforcement for rule compliance.
  - If discipline is used disproportionately in relation to positive consequences it leads to a fear-based culture. This causes lower morale, reduced trust, lower productivity, less teamwork and lack of engagement. Furthermore, it suppresses reporting incidents which cripples the organization's ability to learn from mistakes and become more proactive.
- Celebrate successes in a way that is not focused solely on a company's safety record, but also in what is being done every day to achieve that record.

**7. Good hiring practices**

- Pre-screen workers during the interview/application process.
- Develop and implement a physical and drug screen requirement for applicants.

**8. Identify hazards and correct them**

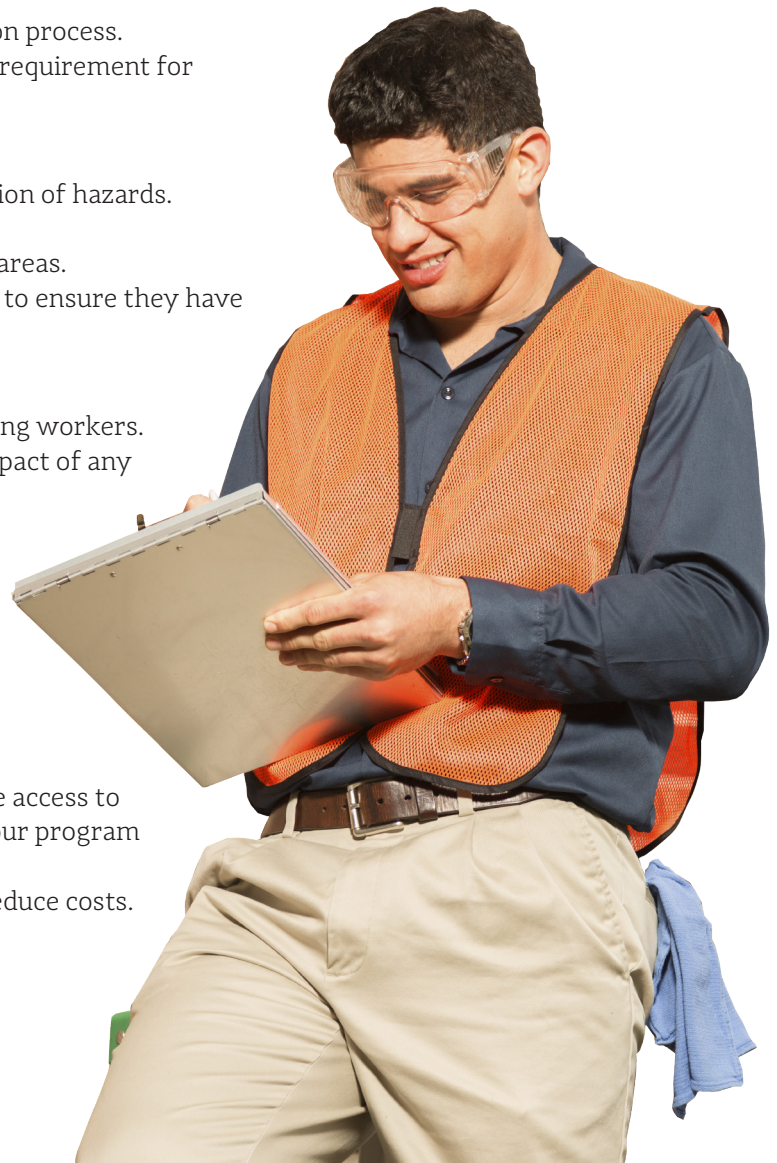
- Relentlessly pursue the identification and remediation of hazards.
- Conduct regular hazard inspections.
- Encourage employees to assist in their perspective areas.
- Follow up on hazard identifications and corrections to ensure they have been effectively controlled.

**9. Return-to-Work program**

- RTW programs send a strong message of unity among workers.
- RTW programs make the single largest financial impact of any workers' compensation or safety program.
- Employees remain active in the workplace, which encourages a more rapid return to full duty.
- Employees can continue to contribute to the collective work effort even in a reduced-work capacity.

**10. Partner with independent agents and insurance companies**

- Agent and Insurance company representatives have access to many resources that can be helpful in enhancing your program elements.
- Partnerships resolve issues more quickly and can reduce costs.





## Daily Safety Focus Process – Five Steps to Success

A Daily Safety Focus Process (DSF) effectively outlines the entire program process and helps keep management and employees motivated in their safety responsibilities.

1. Identify and document safety hazards/ exposures for every job description.
2. Make sure that each employee has received safety training for all identified hazards/ exposures.
3. Develop a “Daily Safety Focus” list for each job description, to include safety checks for each identified hazard/exposure; and present the focus lists to employees.
4. Require each employee to consider their focus list every day, and if necessary, to ensure that each hazard/exposure has been eliminated or controlled.
5. Management should promote and reinforce that their employees must perform their “Daily Safety Focus.”



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