

Information Bulletin

NUMBER 45

Supervisor Accountability

As a business owner, you can appreciate the need for a good safety program. You have your written program and you conduct your safety meetings but, you are still having losses. Why is that?

Communication Is Important

The primary problem is the lack of consistent communication by line supervisors or lead people with the line employees regarding safety. Supervision is allowed to blame the employee for the accident and thus accepts no responsibility for an unintended event. What we now have is an unintended occurrence with no consequences, therefore, no corrective action. Without some type of corrective action by management, the sequences that lead to the unintended event still exist, leaving the potential for another incident and the losses to continue.

Accountability Is Important

The key to safety is to have supervisors or lead people accept their roll in the safety process. There must be a consequence to an event. The consequence can be either positive or negative but either way it needs to be consistent. This consequence is the accountability factor.

There are numerous reactions to an accident by a supervisor with the most common being, "it was an employee error, what could I do?" It is the responsibility of the supervisor to enforce safety in the work area. That is one reason they are paid more for their work. Too often safety and productivity are not given the proper balance by the supervisor. If that is the issue then they don't realize the impact of

non-reimbursed expenses to the company when an unintended event occurs.

To effectively motivate the supervisor we need to modify his/her behavior. They need to know what their roll is regarding safety and they need to feel uncomfortable with the current situation. This is where positive or negative consequences are the motivation for change. We can provide a positive consequence for lack of losses or we can provide a negative consequence for having losses.

In large organizations, senior management often rewards a supervisor for exceeding his/her production goals without consideration of any losses that may have occurred as the result of their production activity. We inadvertently reward the employee or supervisor for unsafe behavior. Each supervisor needs to understand their role in profitability and how unintended events affect the profitability of the organization. If senior and middle management understand the impact of unintended events on the business profits, we are more able to see how safety is an integral part of daily operations. It requires supervisors to correct unsafe acts when observed, on a consistent basis, and not allow them to be part of the work environment. Even in the smallest of businesses, management needs to be pro-active to safety issues.

As we strive to be competitive in the new world market, we must realize that being pro-active rather than reactive to safety will contribute to the cost effectiveness of our business and allow us to be more competitive. Each layer of management must recognize their roll in safety from the CEO to the line employee. **No one is exempt!**

This bulletin is intended only as a reminder and is offered solely as a guide to assist management in its responsibility of providing a safer working environment. This bulletin is not intended to cover all possible hazardous conditions or unsafe acts that may exist. Other unsafe acts or hazardous conditions should also be noted and corrective action taken.