



# 5 Ways to Motivate Employees to Work Safely

Management can establish all the safety policies and procedures in the world, but when it comes right down to it, maintaining safety and health in any workplace depends on the workers themselves. When we fail to recognize and promote the benefit of safety, chances are pretty good that it's going to show up on the accident and injury records. This ultimately increases your premium for Workers' Compensation coverage, adds to the cost of repairing and maintaining equipment, and, most importantly, can severely impact the lives of employees and their families.

**It is critical to implement the best techniques for motivating your employees to work safety. Some of the most effective techniques involve communication. You need to establish or build employee awareness of safety in the workplace and out on the job sites.**

## 1. SAFETY MEETINGS

By conducting regular safety meetings or tailgate talks, you will be accomplishing a variety of goals:

- You will be communicating to your employees that there is a value placed on safety.
- You will provide detailed information regarding job safety procedures and requirements.
- You will be promoting team spirit and that safety is a team effort.
- You will provide a forum for people to ask specific questions.
- You will have a way to generate feedback and gather ideas.



Keep in mind that the best safety meetings need not be long and involved. Short, specific meetings are generally best. It is much easier to absorb a few ideas rather than a slew of them. Choose an appropriate topic, such as the job of the day or the week, and cover it.

To really encourage interaction, pause to ask for and respond to questions. If you don't know the answer, say so. But don't forget about it. Find the answer and get back to the worker who posed the question. If you need to, provide a handout to give people something to walk away with, to refer to, and to talk about.

## 2. LEARN FROM MISTAKES

With the amount of work being done each day, mistakes are bound to happen. Make the most of these situations by learning from them. Create an environment in your department that allows your crew to feel comfortable sharing experiences with near misses and accidents. Sharing the details of a situation – what they were doing at the time, what precautions were in place, what went wrong, how they handled the situation, what could have been done differently – allows the crew to learn from each other. Treat these experiences as learning opportunities where the crew can help each other avoid making the same mistakes in the future. They are an excellent way to identify areas for improvement of procedures, equipment needs, communication practices, and training needs.

## 3. EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

When they are conducted well and provide good information, safety meetings can make a big difference in attitudes and work practices. And when you notice these differences, make sure they don't go unrecognized.



Recognition can take many forms, and it doesn't have to be complicated. For example, suppose that a few days after a safety meeting on wearing eye protection, you notice a formerly not-so-conscientious worker wearing safety goggles. This kind of attitude should be encouraged through recognition. A simple word or note of appreciation to the employee can work wonders. Even better is a more public recognition among peers at the next safety meeting. This shows your whole team that you do notice and that safety is a priority.

## 4. SAFETY INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

One step beyond simple recognition can move you into an incentive program. While much has been written about the potential negative impact of incentive programs, they have been very successful for many companies.

The best advice is to tread lightly. Keep in mind that safety incentive programs are designed to promote safety attitudes and generate enthusiasm. Improperly run incentive programs can turn into cut-throat, win-at-all-costs competitions that can destroy any feelings of either safety or team unity.



For example, pitting one group of workers against another to see which team can go the longest without a lost-time injury can cause problems. In some cases, workers will stop reporting accidents and injuries for the good of the team. This type of behavior defeats the purpose of a good safety program.

It may work better to promote the positives. For example, consider providing awards for the best safety suggestion of the month. Or reward the team that does the best during a surprise safety audit.

## 5. SAFETY REMINDERS



No matter what kind of safety program you have in place, it's important to provide constant reminders to people that you place a high priority on safety. This can be accomplished by simply making comments about good safety practices during daily walk-throughs, but there are other ways of keeping safety in the minds of your people.

Making your safety message visible is one of the best methods. You might consider looking into safety posters that are direct, informative, and eye-catching. However, remember that they quickly blend into the work environment and should be changed and updated regularly.

Many agencies also make use of a designated safety bulletin board which keeps employees up-to-date on current policies, OSHA regulations, etc. Again, the contents of bulletin boards will lose their effectiveness unless they are routinely updated.

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