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Beginning the Golden Anniversary Year of the

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

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TOP LEVEL INTEREST IN ACCIDENT PREVENTION

By W. A. STRAUSS, President
Northern Natural Gas Company

Safety is an area in which, I believe, you'll find top management of nearly all companies has a real interest. Why? Because accidents cost money not only in plant equipment but in off-duty time lost because of injuries. Believe me, in these days of high costs and keen competition, management—especially top management—is very much interested in conducting the most economical operations possible while still providing the best service or goods to their customers.

Safe operations benefit our customers and our community. Safe operations benefit our employees. And any operating man can tell you how the delays and lost time resulting from accidents increase his operating costs and that these increases are reflected only partly in the payroll statistics. The financial statement does not measure the pain and suffering of an injured man. Accidents cause expenditures for which nothing of value is received in return.

A well organized safety program is a necessity in every company regardless of the number of employees on its payroll.

Everyone is in favor of safety. Everyone is in favor of accident prevention programs. But this isn't enough. The essential thing is how to go about building a safety program.

If you were to conduct a survey of the individual utilities represented here in this room today, I am almost certain that you would find the companies with the best safety records are the companies in which top management has been deeply concerned with safety.

Management's attitude years ago reminds me of the efficiency apartment skit staged by the great comedian, Bert Williams. In this skit, Bert showed his straight man through an efficiency apartment. He pushed a button and a bed slid out of the wall. He opened folding doors which concealed a Pullman kitchenette and other trick gadgets. Duly impressed, the straight man asked, "Bert, what do you do with the garbage?" "Oh, that's easy," Williams replied, "we just kick it around until it gets lost." Bitter

past experience has shown us that you can't kick safety around until it gets lost.

It isn't enough for top management to merely indorse a safety program. No . . . management can't just talk a good safety program without assuming an active role. How management feels about a safety program determines to a great extent how the employee on the job feels about it. When only a token of recognition is given by management to a safety program you can be sure the employees will reflect this lax attitude in their day-to-day operations.

To be fully effective, safety communications must be free to move in three directions. The communications network must carry safety policy downward: it must carry safety needs and suggestions upward: and it must spread safety training and ideas horizontally to every person at each level of the company.

Channels from top management downward are usually open, but sometimes they carry very little traffic. Safety policy is left to people far down the management ladder and the program suffers—not because the men on the lower level rungs are not qualified but because they need the inspiration and enthusiastic support of the men who have reached the top. When this support is present, downward communications is no problem.

In some cases the upward passage of safety needs is often blocked. This can be a serious loss. In the first place, good upward communications is the only guarantee that top management will have an accurate picture of safety problems and needs. And without an accurate picture of conditions, they can't make realistic policy.

Safety programs must be planned in detail to meet the needs of individual concerns. What works most effectively for you in your company may need adapting to be successful for me in my company.

Available to help you in your safety programs are such organizations as the National Safety Council, American Gas Association, Edison Electric Institute, American

Water Works Association, etc. Management should encourage safety personnel to take an active role in these groups—attend their conventions, serve on their committees because here is an excellent place to exchange information and pick up new ideas and ways of reducing accidents.

There is also a degree and classification of responsibility that top management has. For example, legal responsibility is fixed and defined by law. Moral responsibility, however, has no legal basis nor can it be applicable in equal amounts. Top management will often subscribe wholly to a safety program on the humanistic approach whereby key executives follow the consequences of accidents by thinking of the families of the injured—their economic and social lives. In other words where management doesn't have a safety program on an organized basis, they may well attempt to establish one for humanitarian reasons.

However, regardless of the approach used, it soon becomes apparent that all avenues of "safety sense" lead to the goal, providing top management becomes more than a purely disinterested party.

Along this same line, top management has the responsibility of assigning competent people to safety jobs. Safety isn't a job for a semi-retiree to fill out until he officially retires. While some smaller companies may not be able to have a safety department as such: and, in fact, the person in charge of safety may have to divide his time with some other phase of operations—nevertheless, he should be a qualified person and one who has a real interest in safety—from a dollars and cents angle as well as the humanitarian aspect.

However, there are certain basic elements I feel are necessary to any successful safety or accident prevention program. High on the top of the list I would put management leadership. An effective safety program needs the full indorsement of top management. It must be a continuous program—not something you can turn on following a mishap and turn off when things seem to be running smoothly. There are no short cuts to safety. It must be a continuing program.

Accident prevention should be the responsibility of all supervisors. It is immaterial if he is a supervisor in the field

or in the office—nor does it matter if he supervises one person or a hundred. Accident prevention is an integral part of day-to-day operations.

If a supervisor or foreman refuses to be bothered with the safety program, the entire program may fail. After all, he is the most important man in the entire picture of accident prevention. He is on the spot where the work is actually being done. He can stop employees from taking unnecessary chances. By merely a word here—and an example there—he can do a great deal to teach his fellow workers the safe way of performing a task.

Providing safe working conditions is another essential element of a successful safety program. This entails providing the necessary tools, protective devices and equipment to permit an employee to carry out his job in the safest manner possible. Plant facilities should be inspected on a regular basis as to possible fire hazards, general condition of floors, lights, heating equipment, ventilation, etc.

A comprehensive program of training in safety is necessary for all employees regardless of whether they are clerical or service employees. Safety of employees depends on their own conduct.

An adequate medical and first aid system is essential to a safety program. Your company medical director should design a pre-employment physical examination to meet your needs. He should be available to you for consultations regarding the placement of personnel that may be physically handicapped through illness or injury. Sufficient supplies as well as qualified personnel to render first aid on the spot will in many cases permit you to keep minor injuries from becoming major ones. Studies reveal individuals trained in first aid have fewer injuries than those not trained.

An accident record system should be set up and maintained. Records will show a pattern of injuries . . . for example a check of records may reveal back sprains have suddenly multiplied in one particular department or perhaps eye injuries have been on the increase in a certain department, etc. Naturally these records will need to be reviewed periodically to pin-point a pattern.

Most important is the problem of getting

all employees to accept personal responsibilities for accident prevention.

In my own company a new approach to safety education was adopted early last year based on findings from a survey of listeners' fact retention. The average listener will retain 5 to 10 per cent of what he hears in a non-illustrated lecture: 30 to 50 per cent of what he hears and sees in a visual presentation, and 60 to 70 per cent of what he is presented at a conference type discussion in which he is an active participant.

The problem was to convert Northern's safety education program from a series of lectures to a series of discussion conferences into which every employee could be drawn as an active participant.

First, safety education material to be used in the program had to be changed from material suitable for an illustrated lecture to material suitable to be used for a discussion conference.

Also, our 68 compressor plant and pipeline district safety chairmen had to be trained in the technique of conference leadership.

We selected as the basis for this new safety education program a series of subjects—utilizing material that had been prepared by the National Safety Council, U. S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Mines and the American Gas Association. To adapt the material for use in a discussion conference, the scripts were re-written and spiced with questions to invite the listener to actively participate in the presentation.

We recognized that the best safety education material is of little value unless it is presented by people trained to present it. That's why all 68 safety chairmen and first aid instructors throughout our company were trained in conference leadership. This gets back to our original feeling that participation by employees leads to their acceptance of personal responsibilities.

All of the elements I have mentioned we at Northern Natural Gas company have found necessary to a successful safety program. All must be kept in mind by management, by supervisors and by the workers. Neglect of any one of the elements may be the cause of the safety program to become weakened and collapse.

The prevention of accidents is just good business. It's good business from a public

relations standpoint—from an employee relations standpoint and from a financial standpoint.

From a public relations standpoint, no company likes to find itself mentioned in the columns of a newspaper or on a radio or television newscast when the story involves damage to its plant property or injuries to some of its employees as a result of some accident or unsafe practice that could have been avoided.

But think of the good public relations your company derives from a good safety program.

And while accidents make poor public relations, think what it does to the morale of employees. And, a company with a poor safety record soon finds itself in a position of no longer attracting new employees of the caliber they would like. Stockholders who have read of the poor safety record and frequent accidents in the company decide it is a poorly managed company and choose to invest their money in some other concern.

What does it take to maintain a qualified safety staff of adequate size? It takes money—it takes time and it takes the attention of top management. It is a slow process but the collateral benefits are many.

To you people here today representing the communications industry, let me offer my congratulations for your excellent record of less than one disabling injury per million man hours worked. We in the gas industry have for the past 14 consecutive years improved our safety record but still have a way to go to match the record of the communication industry. But I think you'll agree with me when I say that where safety is concerned perfection—though usually out of reach—is worth seeking. Remember, too, although you may be reducing the number of accidents that take place in your companies, the cost of accidents today is much greater than years ago, due to increased medical costs and the fact that the daily wages of employees has increased considerably in the past 15 years.

An old Chinese tale tells of a group of cultured Chinese gentlemen who met occasionally to drink tea. The tea was supplied by a different member each time and keen competition developed to obtain rare exotic types that would reflect credit on the taste

and resources of the host. At each meeting a new tea would be served, and all would exult at the delicate and unusual flavor.

Lo Chan's turn to provide the tea came and with great ceremony, he took the leaves from a beautiful silver box and brewed it with exceptional care in the finest porcelain pot they had ever seen. As the gentlemen sipped their tea from delicate cups, they proclaimed its flavor and aroma to be the most exceptional they had ever experienced. All demanded that Lo Chan reveal the source of this unmatched tea for it was truly worth any price. "My honorable guests," said Lo Chan, "the tea about which you exclaim is that which impoverished coolies drink while we sip our imported brews. Does this not prove that if we seek quality with open eyes, we will find it all about us?"

The search for new tools of accident prevention is sometimes like the tea of Lo Chan. The search for the new and different may blind us to the greater value of what is really available to us now.

New, novel and fresh approaches and variations can and should be used to main-

tain both employee's and management's interest in their safety program. But too often our desire to be original closes our eyes to the real value of some of the more basic tools of a safety program.

There is a striking similarity between accident prevention and the practice of management and this is a point I should like to leave with you: safety is effectively attained through knowledge, acceptance of basic principles, plus an exact breakdown of the operation itself. Management, including top management is not very different—we too operate on principles, facts and a methodology. Safety has come of age and its implications to top management are of as much concern as the profit and loss statement. Loss of life, property and dollars becomes very meaningful when the real picture is brought into focus.

Yes, top management has a definite interest in accident prevention. We will continue to provide the tools necessary but we will rely on you—the safety and operating personnel—to keep these tools sharp and in top working condition.

OFF-THE-JOB SAFETY

By W. K. KOCH

President, Mountain States Telephone, Denver, Colo.

Unfortunately, there seems to be in some quarters a wide gap between basic thinking about the problem of off-duty safety and wholehearted action to do something about it. Consequently, I think the best service I can perform here today to try to communicate to you the *sense of urgency* that I feel for an all-out attack by industry on off-the-job accidents.

This sense of urgency comes to me from two directions. The first direction is the present. During 1962, about 90,000 Americans will be killed in accidents of all kinds. This estimate could be low, for the accident toll in the first seven months was greater than expected. But based on original estimates, only 13,000 of the total deaths will occur at work. The vast majority of fatalities—77,000 of them—will re-

sult from non-work accidents. This non-work figure is important and one I wish you to keep in mind. I will concentrate on off-the-job accidents (or that portion of non-work accidents which involve employees of business and industry) but it is obvious that the non-work toll and the off-the-job toll are closely intertwined. A truly safety-minded employee is going to have an impact on the safety of his family and his friends.

About 30,000 of all accidental deaths this year will be classified as off-the-job fatalities. This is twice the number of estimated deaths on the job. In fact, off-the-job accidents will account for about one-third of all accident fatalities. I am further concerned when I look at the Bell System record and see that our employees experience

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