

## 11—Human Behavior and Safety

other employees who see this take place. A supervisor by recognizing the same needs, however, can reinforce this learning through praise for greater productivity and telling the worker how much better he is doing, for example.

The publicity given to a safety record, a bonus, a promotion, or anything which satisfies individual needs would serve as a reward to reinforce whatever learning has brought about the desired behavior.

A reward must closely follow the behavior to be rewarded. The praise, for example, should be given at the time the desired behavior occurs, not some long time later. This does not mean it must be instantaneous, but it should be within a reasonable length of time. If delay is necessary, certainly recall to the individual the reason for the reward.

Reward reinforces desired learning. Short-cut hazardous methods or any deliberate unsafe acts must not be rewarded. In fact, in such situations reprimands or punishment should be given. Action must concentrate on the error and not on the personality involved, for to do otherwise would lead to trial-and-error by the individual which is no more satisfactory than the wrong method. In short, wrong methods should be corrected by full and complete explanation and demonstration of the correct work procedures. Such being the case, it also follows that there should be reinforcement of the new correct work pattern as soon as feasible.

This principle also applies to participation by employees in a safety program whether it be through suggestion systems, safety committees, discussion groups or training sessions. In all these areas a man gains personal worth if his opinions are asked for and graciously received. He feels, too, that he is more than just a cog, and that he is giving of his creative self as an important member of the team.

A safety program that gathers the ideas of all, either individually or by representation, satisfies the need people have for being "in the know." In this way, the safety professional creates that positive atmosphere of ego-involvement in the program and a sense of obligation and responsibility for its success. Research has demonstrated that when employees do not feel that programs are top-level-planned, but rather come from all, there

is far more chance for success.

Much research on the effectiveness of punishment suggests that it possesses limited utility in the learning process. While punishment may temporarily inhibit a specific response, it does not appear to have enduring effects upon learning. When used to control behavior, punishment (and the threat of punishment) must be present continuously rather than intermittently. Thus, it does not appear to be an efficient technique for controlling behavior.

The rewarding of correct procedures will lead to a more positive attitudinal response on the part of the worker than any punishment. A positive attitude toward training procedures is much to be desired. Both the positive and the negative aspects of reinforcement may generalize over the whole work situation. The foreman's praise for a particular thing well done may spread over other aspects of the total situation, including training procedures, safety devices, and the safety program. The proper use of rewards thus can lead to efficient methods.

Much of the practice underlying programmed instruction (see Chapter 9, "Safety Training") is based upon the reinforcement concept as well as the other principles of learning which follow.

**Knowledge of results.** Closely allied to reward—in fact, one aspect of reward—is knowledge of results. Everyone likes to know how he is doing on a particular job. Letting the individual employee know how well he is getting along in his training program will likely motivate him to continue training and do a better job. To train a worker and not inform him of any improvement is defeating one's own purpose. It cannot be contended that the only one who needs to know about the effects of training is the foreman or the safety professional. When the worker knows that this new procedure is helping him get greater production, he is getting reward reinforcement for his learning.

One of the factors which appears in some kinds of learning is a plateau at which learning levels off for some time before again showing an increase. Often some individuals become discouraged and learning can be retarded. If the trainer understands this phenomenon and indicates to the individual that a