

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

PETROLEUM NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER, 1979

WEB OF MOTIVATION LEADS TO UNSAFE WORK PRACTICES

In almost any operation, unsafe conditions and mechanical failures are the easiest to control. Unsafe physical conditions can be seen, and positive action can be taken to correct them. Eliminating or controlling unsafe conditions also helps to control unsafe work practices or unsafe acts by making the individual worker increase his awareness of personal work habits that could cause injury.

Human behavior is more complex. Here are 10 principal factors which cause unsafe work practices or unsafe acts by the individual:

1. DID NOT KNOW HAZARD EXISTED - This may be from a lack of experience, inability to recognize a hazardous condition, a temporary hazard created by a fellow employee, a chain of circumstances, or a lack of job training.

2. INDIFFERENCE - The individual may know the safe method but may not care; this can be a temporary or continuing attitude. It is necessary that supervisors insist that certain standards be met by employees under their supervision.

3. DARING - This type of behavior blinds an individual to hazards that exist. Such an individual might also be classified as a clown, and there are enough problems on a job without clowns.

4. POOR WORK HABITS - From doing the same job day after day, poor work habits are often formed. Some may be formed early in the job; others may be developed later. This can be seen when an individual works many years and suddenly becomes an accident victim. He may have had poor work habits all along, and the law of averages finally caught up with him.

5. POOR EXAMPLE SET - A new employee may follow the example of an older employee who has unsafe work practices or habits.

6. LAZINESS - All persons are lazy; it's the degree that becomes critical.

7. HASTE - The desire to get something done fast can cause an injury or an unrealistic speed-up on the job.

8. TEMPER - This can also be classified as impatience or lack of emotional control which can lead to an unsafe act.

9. PHYSICAL FAILURE AND FATIGUE - The individual may have physical limitations; he may be on a job he cannot handle properly. This may be because of poor eyesight, hearing or general health.

10. LACK OF TRAINING ON THE JOB - This can be the most glaring cause. A supervisor should be certain that each employee knows his job; if he does not, the supervisor is failing in his job. Lack of job training is a handicap. A supervisor has a responsibility to the employee as well as to the company in carrying out necessary job training.

Many unsafe practices or unsafe acts cause damage to materials, products, and equipment but cause no injury. If an employee is injured, it is a safety problem, if not, it is a production problem. Basically, it is the same problem - an unsafe work practice or unsafe act.

Unsafe acts are production problems whether you ruin the machine, the product or the man.

Eliminate the unsafe work practices or unsafe acts from the production process, and improve production, reduce costs, minimize injuries.

As a supervisor of workers, you should:

1. Have a system or procedure of instructing each worker about the work.
2. Point out the pride your crew has in their ability to do a job safely.
3. Emphasize the point that there is always time to do the job safely.
4. Point out that an accident or injury is a result of someone's failure.
5. Do your best to make new workers feel that you want them to make good.
6. Encourage workers to ask questions about the work and about safe procedures.

If you are a worker:

1. Ask questions when in doubt. The only stupid question is the question that is not asked.
2. Do your part and more to show you want to be a good, safe-working employee.
3. Be willing to take the lead in the on-the-job safety meetings.
4. Observe; learn from others.
5. Remember the supervisor's instructions and always follow safe working procedures.