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# Employee engagement in safety

Employee engagement in workplace safety is critical for maintaining a safe and productive environment. When employees actively engage in safety efforts, they're more likely to follow protocols, identify hazards and contribute to a culture prioritizing well-being. Employee engagement will differ from company to company depending upon factors such as culture, leadership, employees and the current safety program. Regardless of the type of safety program you have, involving employees in it will show the company's dedication to safety in the workplace. An effective way to protect employees is to involve them in your company's safety program. There are a number of ways to do this, so it is important you find out what works best for yours.

Here are some strategies to encourage engagement:

## **Involve Employees in Safety Planning**

Active participation in the company's safety planning meetings and risk assessments will allow workers to voice their concerns, concerns of others and suggest improvements. Many employees have first-hand knowledge of tasks and job functions and can highlight potential risks, hazards and offer better solutions others may overlook.

## **Empower Employees to Speak Up**

There are many ways to encourage employees to report hazards, near-misses and unsafe behaviors. The key is to encourage reporting without fear of reprimand. Suggestion boxes, computer reporting software, safety meetings and toolbox talks can all be used to address safety concerns and make employees feel comfortable contributing to safety.

## **Provide Ongoing Safety Training and Development**

Develop a training program that offers guidance and knowledge to employees. Training is required in many situations for compliance but it should be more than that. The main focus of training is to encourage employees to work safely to eliminate injuries. Remind them that nobody wants to get hurt at work and safety training is key to preventing injuries. Regular, interactive training keeps safety top-of-mind and helps employees retain knowledge. Customize the topics for different departments or areas.

## **Set Clear, Achievable Safety Goals**

Goals can be a great way to encourage employees to get involved in safety. Recognize individual and team efforts to meet these goals, which can help keep everyone motivated. However, avoid setting goals that focus on injury reduction as this might discourage employees from reporting. Acknowledge employees who consistently follow safety practices and contribute to safety initiatives. Rewards can range from public recognition to tangible incentives.

### **Encourage Positive Peer Influence**

Create a culture where employees remind each other about safety practices and help correct unsafe behaviors. Focus on the point that safety is everyone's responsibility and not one department or person. No single employee should be policing safe work practice, but it should be a responsibility of everyone. Reinforce to staff that reporting unsafe conditions and behaviors is key to prevention and keeping an overall safe workplace. When safety is part of the team's shared responsibility, compliance improves naturally.

### **Leadership by Example**

Probably one of the most important parts to a safe workplace is leading by example. When leaders consistently demonstrate commitment to safety, it sends a strong message. Regardless of who enters the work area, ensure employees wear required PPE and follow safety guidelines such as staying within marked walking areas. Engaged leadership shows that safety is a priority and not just an obligation. Employees who regularly do not enter the work area and are seen not following safety rules shows to employees that safety is not a priority.

### **Regularly Communicate Safety Information**

Keep safety visible with bulletin boards, digital displays, posters or company newsletters. Regular reminders reinforce the importance of safety in the workplace. The safety message should be changed periodically (weekly or monthly). Use these communication channels to reinforce safety guidelines, such as PPE usage, Safety Data Sheet information or review of safe work practices.

### **Evaluate and Act on Feedback**

Regularly request feedback on safety processes and be proactive in implementing suggested changes. When employees see their feedback leads to improvements, they're more likely to stay engaged. Regardless of how small a safety suggestion may seem, always get back to the employee with a response. Ignoring requests can demonstrate a non-caring attitude toward safety.

Encouraging employee engagement into your company's safety program is a great way to demonstrate how important safety is in the workplace. When developing a strategy that is specific to your culture, be creative, think outside the box and include employee suggestions. Once you've come up with a strategy that fits your organization, communicate it with employees. Share the philosophy that safety is the number one priority. Remember, in a workplace where employees feel valued, supported and empowered to contribute to safety, they'll be more likely to stay actively engaged in creating a safe environment.

If you need help identifying potential hazards in your workplace, please contact Andy Sawan, risk services specialist at Sedgwick at [andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com](mailto:andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com) or 330.819.4728.