

Linda Goldenhar

PS: What is the difference between safety culture and safety climate, and why is this distinction important?

Linda: Specific definitions of these two concepts vary and are often used interchangeably, but there are distinctions. Safety culture pertains to a company's espoused safety-related values and norms demonstrated by its policies and procedures, while safety climate refers to employees' perceptions of those values and norms on the actual job site. Which term someone uses is probably less important than knowing where to target needed change to improve overall safety performance; do corporate safety policies need to be improved (culture) or is it a matter of how good policies are implemented on the job site (climate).

PS: What are some ways that safety culture or safety climate can be measured?

Linda: Typically, safety climate is measured by administering a perception survey instrument to employees and management. Analysis of the data collected would include looking for perception gaps between the groups to help identify areas where change may be needed. Safety culture is a bit more difficult to measure but can be assessed using anthropologic methods such as conducting interviews and reviewing safety-related documents. The data collected would be analyzed using qualitative methods to determine the espoused safety culture of the company.

PS: Can you give an example of one way that safety culture and safety climate can be improved in order to help reduce injuries on construction work sites?

Linda: At the Safety Culture/Climate workshop in 2013, stakeholders identified eight key leading indicators of safety climate:

- 1) demonstrating management commitment;
- 2) aligning and integrating safety as a value;
- 3) ensuring accountability at all levels;
- 4) improving supervisory leadership;
- 5) empowering and involving workers;
- 6) improving communication;
- 7) training at all levels;
- 8) encouraging owner/client involvement.

While we have not done rigorous research to determine which of the eight is most important, industry stakeholders tell us that improving the

leadership skills of frontline foremen via skills training is probably one of the most important, if not the key, way to reduce adverse outcomes.

PS: You recently presented a session at ASSE's Construction Safety Symposium. What were some key takeaways?

Linda: The key takeaway was a greater understanding of the need to strengthen job site safety climate by identifying and improving leading indicators of safety climate. I introduced attendees to CPWR's workbook, Strengthening Jobsite Safety Climate by Using and Improving Leading Indicators, which contains self-assessment rubrics and ideas for applying and improving each of the eight leading indicators on their own job sites.

Participants also became familiar with a new supervisory leadership module that in the not-too-distant future will be available for them to use to improve supervisory leadership skills, a key leading safety climate indicator.

PS: What types of initiatives is CPWR trying to create greater consensus on the industry's definitions of safety culture and climate?

Linda: CPWR in partnership with NIOSH held a workshop in June 2013 entitled, "Safety Culture and Safety Climate in Construction: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice." The planning team prepared a report detailing the workshop activities, findings and recommendations. We also created a workbook based in large part on the workshop findings and have been disseminating it widely to various stakeholder groups such as construction companies, insurance companies, and safety and health professional associations.

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More on Culture & Climate

In 2013, CPWR and NIOSH held a 1-day workshop, "Safety Culture and Climate in Construction: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice." The goals were to 1) help define what these terms mean; 2) identify ways to measure safety culture/climate on sites; and

3) identify effective ways to improve safety culture/climate.

For more information about the workshop, and to download a report, key findings and presentations, visit <http://bit.ly/1Yb7ftp>.