#3

Ensuring Accountability at All Levels

Construction management, in partnership with their employees, is responsible for ensuring that jobsite hazards are eliminated, or at least minimized. These partnerships are most effective when they exist within a positive safety climate.

> The **safety climate** on a construction jobsite refers to managements' and employees' shared perceptions about the extent to which safety is rewarded, expected, valued and reinforced. It may be influenced by things such as project scheduling and planning methods and norms of the trades working on-site.

Everyone involved in a construction project should be held accountable for safety, including the contractors' safety personnel and supervisors, and workers. Specific responsibilities for implementing safety need to be clearly defined at all levels appropriate for an individual's role, and communicated and regularly reinforced. Which of the following best describes your company?

INATTENTIVE →	REACTIVE →	COMPLIANT →	PROACTIVE →	EXEMPLARY
Safety-related expectations are not clearly articulated. Only employees are held accountable for safety performance. There are no performance reviews or safety metrics. Bonuses are based on productivity and number of reported injuries, which may discourage reporting. Incident or close call investigations result in punishment. Written safety or health policies don't exist.	Employees are automatically punished (e.g., fined, suspended, or fired) for poor safety performance. Poor project safety performance carries few consequences for supervisors. Safety goals are not established and performance measures are not gathered moving forward nor used to evaluate progress.	Established safety goals are based only on OSHA guidelines. The company collects injury and illness data, but they are not shared with supervisors or workers. Incident investigations are conducted but they are not performed in a "blame-free" manner.	Safety goals go above and beyond OSHA guidelines and are used as a basis for supervisor performance and to ensure continuous improvement. All employees are recognized and sometimes rewarded for identifying hazards, reporting close calls, creating safety solutions, and for superior safety performance. Incident investigations result in positive outcomes and improvement.	Safety commitment and expectations are consistently communicated across the company, and to all business partners. Everyone is recognized and included in safety awards based on leading vs. lagging indicators. Supervisor and worker performance evaluations are based on leading and lagging safety indicators. Safety measures are compared to other companies' performance measures and used for continuous improvement. Safety performance is a primary factor in hiring managers and subcontractors, and for promotions. All types of project employees are responsible for safety. Incident investigations result in positive outcomes and improvement, and lessons are shared.

How to become exemplary

Review the ideas below and check the short-term ◯ (1-2 months), mid-term ◯ (6-12 months), or long-term ◯ (1-2 years) circle to indicate which you will commit to adopt and by when. Congratulations, if you've already adopted the idea!

Idea #1 - Create an incentive structure that promotes and rewards safety processes not just outcomes

◯ — Already Adopted
◯ — Short-term
◯ — Mid-term
◯ — Long-term

Companies may create a disincentive to report incidents if workers, supervisors, and crews are rewarded for achieving a low recordable injury rate. This sends mixed messages about whether safety is valued compared to productivity and other company requirements. Mixed messages can lead to confusion and damage the trust between employees and management necessary to achieve a positive safety climate. A better approach is to recognize and reward employees for identifying, reporting, and eliminating hazards. An on-line incident reporting system could be developed that employees would use to notify management when an incident or close call is reported. An "action list" could be placed in a prominent location to show how issues are being addressed and who was rewarded for identifying the hazard. This creates a climate that reinforces the idea that employee contributions for implementing safety are valued.

Idea #2 - Develop, distribute, and implement written safety policies

○ — Already Adopted
○ — Short-term
○ — Mid-term
○ — Long-term

Written safety policies should clearly describe expectations, roles, and responsibilities for establishing and maintaining a positive jobsite safety climate. The policies should be developed through a joint effort of affected staff and be signed by the owner. The policies should be distributed to and reviewed with all employees, incorporated into the company's safety manual, and be reinforced verbally on a daily basis.

Idea #3 - Conduct blame-free incident investigations

○ — Already Adopted
○ — Short-term
○ — Mid-term
○ — Long-term

Cursory investigations of incidents that seek to blame, rather than learn, hamper the development of a positive safety climate and the free flow of information. Such investigations can generate a climate of fear among employees that often leads to under- or non-reporting of potential hazards, close calls, and injuries. While underreporting may improve a company's safety record, it does not lead to a stronger safety climate and may weaken it. First-line supervisors need training on how to conduct blame-free incident and close call investigations. Companies should try hard to find the root cause of all incidents by examining the possible contributing environmental, organizational, and human factors. Mechanisms must be implemented to share findings throughout the company.

Idea #4 - Incorporate safety leadership into supervisor evaluations

○ — Already Adopted
○ — Short-term
○ — Mid-term
○ — Long-term

A supervisor's annual performance evaluation should emphasize his/her leadership skills with respect to safety. A competency-based scale (like the one above) could be developed that lays out the expectations for poor to superior performance. The scale would contain leadership behaviors such as the supervisor's ability to empower employees to identify hazards and stop work if necessary, report incidents, and participate in blame-free incident investigations. Competency-based scale evaluation data can be gathered by asking employees directly about on-site safety leadership and by observational methods. Strengths and weaknesses identified in the evaluation should be discussed with supervisors so improvement goals can be developed.