

# Encouraging Owner/Client Involvement

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.

Project owners/clients have the authority to develop and issue project policies, shape bid practices, and approve budgets – all of which, if done with a focus on safety, can result in an excellent safety climate and project performance. Which of the following best describes your company?

INATTENTIVE	→ REACTIVE	→ COMPLIANT	→ PROACTIVE	→ EXEMPLARY
<p>Project owner/client does not require safety pre-qualifications from contractors, and makes selections based on lowest bids. Project owner/client has no understanding of or presence in the safety process.</p>	<p>Contractors with poor safety records may be excluded from bidding, but there are no meetings to discuss why the safety record is poor or how to improve. Data aren't reviewed for trends.</p>	<p>Project owner/client relies exclusively on federal, state, and local safety laws for pre-qualification criteria but use low bid for selecting contractors. Project owner/client depends on conventional methods of insuring the job (e.g., insurance provided by the contractors).</p>	<p>Project owner/client communicates safety expectations to contractors and consistently enforces them on-site. There is a site-specific safety template for each job that all contractors are required to follow. There are regularly scheduled safety meetings with all contractors and owners. Injury and illness trends are used to determine weaknesses. Safety programs are reviewed at least annually.</p>	<p>Contractors are selected based on safety practices/ climate rather than low bid. Project owner/client participates in daily planning meetings, are regularly on-site to connect with and learn from employees, and there is a representative on-site to monitor and assist with safety program implementation. Prevention through Design (PtD) is used in the design and planning phases, which includes employees. Project owner/client provides adequate resources to ensure that safety is valued as much as productivity.</p>

## 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 – Project owner/client presence on-site demonstrates safety buy-in and provides the foundation for a strong safety climate:

#### 1a. Participate and lead employee orientation

Site orientations help familiarize employees with potential hazards they may face on the jobsite. Orientation also helps establish a foundation for two-way communication between project owners/clients, contractors, and employees about safety issues. When employees see project owners demonstrate that they value safety, they are more confident that participating in safety efforts is important.

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

#### 1b. Devote adequate resources to implementing safety programs and enforcing policies

To show a true commitment to protecting employees, project owner/client must make available adequate resources to those managing the safety program. Safety policies and programs are meaningless unless they are effectively implemented, enforced, reviewed, and if necessary, modified.

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

**1c. Create mechanisms for contractors to voice safety concerns**

Create a climate where contractor concerns are heard and those who identify hazards are recognized. It may be important to offer contractors alternative ways to communicate with owners about potential hazards including suggestion boxes placed in multiple locations, surveys, and informal non-threatening interviews.

-  Already Adopted
-  Short-term
-  Mid-term
-  Long-term

**1d. Join daily planning meetings and safety walk-arounds, and ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE**

As often as possible, project owner/client should participate in daily pre-task planning meetings (or huddles) and joint site safety walk-arounds with contractors' management and employees. Asking field personnel for solutions to safety-related issues clearly demonstrates "walking the talk"; that is, as long as feasible suggestions are considered and acted upon. Project owner's participation in safety activities and following safety rules helps employees trust management's espoused safety values. Nothing sours a relationship like "Do as I say, not as I do."

-  Already Adopted
-  Short-term
-  Mid-term
-  Long-term

**Idea #2 - Incorporate safety throughout the design and planning phases of the project:**

**2a. Take safety into account when selecting and evaluating contractors**

Carefully review contractors' safety program and policies, as well as their safety performance, when pre-qualifying and selecting them for a project. Review bids for reasonable PPE, safety supplies, and training. Data on lagging indicators (e.g., injuries) may reflect underreporting rather than a strong commitment to safety. Responsibilities, expectations, and evaluation metrics based on safety climate indicators (like the ones in this workbook) should be specified in the contract, and selected contractors should be held accountable for meeting those expectations.

-  Already Adopted
-  Short-term
-  Mid-term
-  Long-term

**2b. Use Prevention through Design (PtD) methods**

Provide PtD training for in-house and contracted architects and engineers to educate them on strategies they can use to design hazards out of equipment, structures, materials, and processes that may negatively affect employees and end-users. Consider value added engineering of PtD in costs and schedule.

-  Already Adopted
-  Short-term
-  Mid-term
-  Long-term

**Idea #3 - Make the project owner/client accountable for safety**

Project owner/client should participate in regular safety committee meetings that have a rotating chair so that the project owner/client is periodically the safety committee chair. Project owner/client should have an open door policy for contractors to discuss safety issues and ensure that their representatives in the field follow all safety rules.

-  Already Adopted
-  Short-term
-  Mid-term
-  Long-term