

Fostering Communication to Improve Construction Safety

The effects of error management climate and safety communication on safety: A multi-level study

Konstantin P. Cigularov, Peter Y. Chen, and John Rosecrance. Accident Analysis and Prevention, September 2010.

Overview

Work in the construction industry is dangerous, but proper safety communication and a positive error management climate can improve occupational safety on the job site. A significant body of research suggests that frequent and open communication between supervisors and employees is associated with improved occupational safety, and that a supportive error management climate in the company – one in which supervisors encourage employees to use accidents and near-misses as opportunities for learning and improvement – can foster such communication. Researchers surveyed 235 plumbers and pipefitters employed by 15 different contractors in two regions of the United States to explore the effects of **safety communication** and **error management climate** on workers' **safety behaviors and outcomes** in the construction industry.

Key Findings

- Survey responses indicated that construction employees working for contractors, which fostered a supportive error management climate and safety communications, were more likely to engage in safety behaviors and reported less work-related pain, substantiating the importance of these factors in construction safety.
- Workers who reported a positive error management climate were also less likely to report work-related injuries, although this effect did not rise to statistical significance at the contractor level.
- Management, such as superintendents or general foremen, should avoid creating “a climate of fear” which can adversely affect the free sharing of information in the organization. Instead, they should acknowledge the educational value of errors, constructively respond to and deal with errors, exhibit a supportive, non-punitive, coaching management style, as well as model positive communication by sharing information with their employees.

For more information, contact:

Konstantin Cigularov: kcigular@odu.edu

See abstract:

<http://bit.ly/1IYZqxP>

©2014, CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training. CPWR, the research and training arm of the Building and Construction Trades Dept., AFL-CIO, is uniquely situated to serve construction workers, contractors, practitioners, and the scientific community. This card was made possible by a cooperative agreement with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH (OH009762). The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NIOSH.



THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

WWW.CPWR.COM