

SAFETY BULLETIN

Ensure your Team is Prepared!

Challenges Creating a Culture of Fairness

Safety committees have long had the reputation of being safety cops. Many employees viewed being a member of the safety committee as punishment for doing something wrong or as something only the new hires should have to endure. The idea of reviewing injury reports and recommending fellow workers be punished for an accident was a sure fire way to become unpopular with co-workers really fast. High Reliability Organizations rise above that unevolved mind set by creating a culture throughout the organization of fair treatment of employees when an accident or near miss occurs.

A safety committee's job is not to fix blame. Too often untrained safety committee members review an injury report and quickly point to a policy that has been violated and blame the accident on that policy violation. The committee then moves on to the next injury report. This surface approach to accident investigation lacks the thoroughness needed to identify the true cause of the injury. It frequently singles out an employee and fixes blame on work habits that are universal throughout the organization. This practice creates distrust of the safety committee. Employees in this type of organization prefer to hide from safety issues rather than to come forward and work to resolve the dangers they face daily.

A fair or just culture is one that gives amnesty to past events when they become aware of wide spread non-compliance. The non-compliance is corrected through conducting an audit of practice. The audit starts with validating that the written policy is the "best practice" and can be implemented in the work place without violating other competing work safety practices. Once a "best practices" policy has been established, it may be that the department just needs to re-validate the existing policy and then retrain all employees. Once the employees are retrained, it must then be clearly stated that as of that date forward there will be zero tolerance of any violation of that policy.