

PROMOTING A POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE

According to Safeopedia, safety culture is defined as the way in which safety is managed in a workplace. It is the combination of beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of employees toward the safety of workers and the overall safety of the work environment. Cultivating a safety culture is a key aspect in maintaining workplace safety.

Every district should know whether their safety culture is positive or needs improvement. If you are not sure, consider if employees follow policies and procedures even when no one is around. Are employees reporting hazards and injuries, is personal protective equipment provided and equipment in good working order? Do employees look out for one another and do they feel supported by management? All these things contribute to the type of safety culture at the district.



If you feel your safety culture can improve, here are seven ideas to start with:

Empower Others

By empowering employees to have a say in safety at work, employees feel a sense of ownership and that their opinions matter. Safety committees are a great way to foster this environment. Allow the safety committee to review policies for accuracy and recommend improvements.

Training

By providing appropriate and consistent training for staff, you are sending the message that safety is a priority for the district. Training also prepares employees to recognize possible hazards they may encounter on the job.



Labor Safety

Build Trust

Building trust takes time, but is best accomplished by being honest with one another, communicating clearly, being responsive to one another and being consistent.

Demonstrate Commitment

Administration and employees all have a responsibility to lead by example and consistently do what is right. The focus needs to be on the team, not on the individual. Promises need to be kept when it comes to safety and everyone should have an open mind.

Communicate

Communication should be clear, consistent and often. Regular tailgate meetings are a great way to discuss safety concerns for the day or job ahead. These meetings can be done by staff and rotate through the group. Districts should make policies readily available to staff.

Continually Improving

The district should regularly review their safety policies for accuracy and make any necessary changes. Performing safety assessments of the district works well for identifying risks. Requesting input from employees regarding what is working well and what needs to be changed can also be very effective.

Recognizing Safe Practices

The district should be holding monthly staff meetings to discuss safety and other topics affecting the district. This is a great time for anyone to recognize a staff member seen being safe. Peer recognition is a powerful tool.

Fostering a healthy safety culture at your district will assist in reducing liability and workers' compensation costs, reduce absenteeism, raise productivity, reduce at-risk behavior and minimize the frequency and severity of workplace injuries. The National Safety Council estimated that for every dollar you spend on prevention, it has the potential to save you two dollars. If the district is able to save money, consider upgrading equipment, vehicles or personal protective equipment.

If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding your safety culture, please contact the Risk Management Department at 800-285-5461 or riskmanagement@sdao.com.

