

NEWSLETTER FROM THE HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Preventing Accidents – Promoting Safe Behaviour

Much research has been done into the causes of accidents, and a common finding is that the bulk of accidents are caused by unsafe behaviour – typically 96% unsafe acts compared to only 4% unsafe conditions. Therefore, if businesses are going to make significant improvements in reducing accidents, the issue of behaviour must be tackled. Whole courses are available for tackling human behaviour in relation to safety – this summary provides some key points to be considered. For further guidance contact NASS.

There are many factors that cause people to behave in a particular way – managers should understand these if they are to positively influence safe behaviour. Examples include:

<p>Peer pressure: People feel pressure from their colleagues to act in a particular way.</p>	<p>Misinterpretation of information: If information is poor, fragmented or difficult to understand people can make an incorrect decision.</p>
<p>Management expectation: Managers impose behaviour through the way they talk and act.</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge / skill: Errors can be made if people haven't been properly trained or have insufficient experience.</p>
<p>Perceived benefit: People think they'll finish faster, get more bonus or be congratulated by management if they cut corners / work unsafely.</p>	<p>Other factors: Issues such as fatigue and stress (pressure of work) can cause people to work unsafely.</p>

Unsafe behaviour can be split into two broad categories – errors and violations:-

- Errors are unintended actions where behaviour deviates from an accepted standard resulting in injury or damage.
- Violations are deliberate deviations from rules / procedures.

Actions to prevent recurrence will be different depending on whether the incident resulted from an error or a violation, e.g. using disciplinary procedures for an error is unlikely to prevent a similar incident in the future. Errors / violations can be sub divided into a number of other categories – as a first step, however, it is useful to identify the main category as a tool to determining the best corrective action.

There are a number of key aspects to influencing behaviour, without which efforts to improve safety are likely to be limited. These include:

- **Maintaining a clean and safe working environment** – congested and untidy workplaces not only cause accidents but also adversely affect attitudes and behaviour.

- **Leadership** – managers get the behaviour they demand and deserve. It is crucial to:
 - Set appropriate standards – rules, procedures etc.
 - Communicate these standards clearly – training, toolbox talks, safety contacts etc. Explain the consequences of breaching the standard, not simply the standard itself.
 - Apply the standards consistently – walk the talk. Inconsistent application from any supervisor / manager will allow the system to fall into disrepute.
- **Involvement** – if the people carrying out a task are involved in determining the procedures / rules for the task, and have some control over the area in which they work, they are much more likely to follow the procedures / work in a safe way.
- **Supervision** – first line supervisors have a key role to play. They are the people most likely to see unsafe behaviour, and they should tackle it whenever they see it. Supervisors should have an explicit responsibility to monitor behaviour in their area, praising good behaviour and correcting unsafe behaviour (whether through retraining, coaching, procedure review or whatever).

NASS offers courses in Health & Safety at all levels:-

IOSH Safety for Senior Executives

This one day course is intended for people with strategic responsibility for determining and implementing effective health and safety management within a company and will enable executives to review policy and strategies and introduce changes to enhance the safety culture within their organisation. Delegates receive an IOSH accredited certificate on completion.

Health & Safety Passport Plus

Designed for supervisors, team leaders and managers in the steel stockholding and service centre industry, this 3-day course covers the essential elements of managing workplace health and safety and promoting a safe working culture and has gained official accreditation from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents - RoSPA.

Health & Safety Passport

Aimed at production operators and shop floor workers, this 2 day course covers the essential elements of health & safety law and safe working practices. Like the Passport Plus, this course includes a Knowledge Test and a Workplace Assessment to ensure that the knowledge learnt is applied in the workplace. This course is also accredited by RoSPA.

For further details on any of the above courses please contact the NASS office.