

Seven Indicators of a Strong Safety Culture

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Making positive organizational changes to a safety culture starts at the top, but a multitude of other college goals can make it difficult for a leadership team to prioritize its performance. One of the most critical components of a safety leader's role is incorporating safety into their college's culture. However, overall safety culture can be challenging to define, creating obstacles to measuring a successful integration. These best practices may help safety and risk managers verify the strength of their college's safety culture.

1. College meetings are held to recognize safety efforts.

Lunches, trainings, and college meetings can be used to enforce safety measures and compliment employees for their work towards achieving them, furthering organizational safety. Every opportunity to encourage the importance of following safety protocol with employees in combined meetings can help instill and reinforce a safety mindset in and throughout the college campus.

2. Managers and supervisors participate in safety meetings.

Building a safety committee that includes college stakeholders from a variety of departments and job levels can offer valuable input on the college's safety program. Ideally, managers are invested in the process, but it is also important to have supervisors, deans, and informal leaders participate due to their knowledge of day-to-day job duties and close working relationships with all employees. This will help ensure that the safety committee's efforts trickle down to the right segments of the college workforce.

3. Leadership teams discuss safety in their meetings.

Does executive leadership discuss safety concerns, accidents, and investigations within the college? If so, the tenor of the discussions within those meetings has a better chance of disseminating to the rest of the organization. To enforce a strong safety culture, it is important to lead by example with a strong message of support for safety initiatives.

4. Employees remind leadership of the safety rules across campuses.

Do employees ensure that supervisors are wearing personal protective equipment when required? After all, the safety rules apply to everyone within the organization, regardless of position or title. When employees are empowered to encourage safety amongst their colleagues, especially toward college leadership, it demonstrates broad adoption, acceptance, and enforcement.

5. Employees and supervisors take accountability.

When reading accident reports, are employees blaming the car, equipment, coworker, or weather for an accident? Employees who are accountable for accidents, recognize their

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mistakes, and present an apologetic attitude toward the accident are more likely to learn from their mistakes and improve. Without acknowledging their role in the accident, they are prone to repeating errant behavior. Additionally, when leadership accepts responsibility for their faults, employees are more likely to follow a safety culture since there is perceived equality. Accountability across the college is vital for building a strong safety culture.

6. All accidents and incidents are investigated for review.

Are employees reporting all incidents, even when they are very minor? Are all incidents being investigated and reviewed by supervisors to identify areas of opportunity? When all incidents, both major and minor, are investigated and reviewed, it shows employees that the organization takes all incidents very seriously. Accident reviews should also focus on correcting behavior and not discipline. While behavioral correction may occasionally involve discipline, the focus should be on ensuring incidents are not repeated.

7. Incidents are shared throughout the organization.

There are reasons why some incidents should not be shared throughout the organization to protect the employee. Still, the more incidents are shared in an organization, the more opportunities there are for everyone to learn from mistakes, no matter how severe.