



POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE

Safety culture refers to the shared mindset, values, and operational practices within an organization that support the importance of safety across all activities. It encompasses the collective beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of employees regarding workplace safety and the wellbeing of personnel. Establishing and maintaining a robust safety culture is essential for ensuring a safe working environment.

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 in the district.

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

EMPOWERING OTHERS

Empowering employees to participate in workplace safety fosters ownership and values their input. 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.

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

Both administrators and employees are responsible for setting a positive example and always acting ethically. The emphasis should be placed on teamwork rather than individual achievement. It is important to fulfil promises related to safety, and everyone should remain receptive to new ideas.

CONTINUALLY IMPROVING

The district should regularly review their safety policies for accuracy and make any necessary changes. Safety assessments are a good tool to help the district identify risks. Requesting input from employees regarding what is working well and what needs to be changed can also be very effective. Should the district achieve cost savings, it may be worthwhile investing in newer equipment, vehicles, or enhanced personal protective gear.

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 in your district will assist in reducing liability and workers' compensation costs, reducing absenteeism, raising productivity, reducing at-risk behavior, and minimizing the frequency and severity of workplace injuries. The National Safety Council estimates that for every dollar you spend on prevention, it has the potential to save you two dollars.

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**.

