

Why Many Safety Programs Fail

Employee impact is the most important part of your program

Make sure that you ingrain the information into your employees using whatever works. All the paper documents in the world will not help if your employees are not engaged. That's why we have "safety meetings."

Management must lead

While a lot of the actual technical parts can be delegated, the managers need to step up and at least be present during meetings. No cell phones, no e-mails, and no distractions. Your presence stressed just how important safety is.

Safety meetings are a good investment

During the meeting, talk about actual job requirements and engage your employees. Talking about regulations can cause some employees to tune out. Use "war stories" and close-calls from experienced members to help get the message across.

Find the right setting

Safety training can not be done in a meeting setting. To be useful it needs a trainer, not a lecturer. It also calls for training that matches your job site needs and not what it "says in the book." Make sure the lessons sink in using written tests and jobsite observation. Hire a part-time trainer if you need one. You can also issue credentials for those that have passed the training.

Inspections don't mean safety

Safety inspections are just a small part of the overall picture. If you keep finding the same issues, it may be time for an overhaul. Remember that OSHA can conduct free, no penalty inspections. You'll have to fix all the problems they uncover, but you won't be fined.

Invest in safety

Personal protection equipment is cheap, but quality matters. If it was you out on the jobsite, you'd want the best stuff out there. It doesn't need to be fashionable or pretty, but do your research. Work with local vendors. While it may cost a little more, they may be able to provide more insight to your business and provide ongoing support.

Other good practices

- Don't just tell employees "Don't Do This." The best programs teach, illustrate and provide examples.
- Use a lot of pictures. The new GHS training has plenty of illustrations including signage, warnings and handouts. Find the right picture and use it.
- Bi-lingual safety materials are out there, USE THEM! Any place that offers multiple languages for training materials are likely a good place to look for information. It shows they took the time and effort to have the information translated.

THE SAFETY PROGRAM NEVER 'ENDS'. The best programs have active leadership and are continually evolving, adapting, and moving forward.