

What does a high-performing safety culture look like?

Most people agree that having an effective culture of safety at an organization is important to helping prevent worksite accidents, injuries and fatalities. But a culture of safety does not just happen automatically. The organization must commit to safety as a top-level priority which permeates the entire organization.

Researchers say that organizations with effective safety cultures tend to share certain characteristics. For example, they acknowledge the high risk, error prone nature of the organization's activities. They provide a blame-free environment where individuals can report errors or close calls without punishment. They also collaborate across ranks to seek solutions to vulnerabilities and are willing to direct resources to address safety concerns.

According to safety researcher Thomas Krause, the following nine factors contribute to a high-performing safety culture:

1. **Management credibility:** Employees believe that what management says is consistent with what management does.
2. **Perceived organizational support:** Employees perceive that they get the support necessary to accomplish the organization's goals.
3. **Workgroup relations:** Employees get along with and enjoy their co-workers. The more co-workers treat each other with respect, listen to each others ideas and help out one another, the more likely an organization will have a good safety culture.
4. **Teamwork:** Workers believe that working with team members is an effective way to complete tasks.
5. **Organizational value for safety performance improvement:** Employees believe that the organization values safety performance improvement. The more employees believe that the organization values safety, the more willing they will be to invest in those goals themselves.
6. **Procedural justice:** Individual employees believe that their supervisors' decision-making processes are fair. Workers are confident that decisions which affect them are based on merit and accurate data rather than on prejudice or personal preference.
7. **Leader member exchange:** The workers feel confident that their supervisors will provide support and look out for their interests.
8. **Upward communication:** The employees feel free to speak to their supervisors about safety issues and concerns. And the supervisors are able and willing to speak frankly to their own managers about safety concerns.
9. **Approaching others:** Employees feel free to speak to one another about safety concerns. If an employee sees another employee engaging in risky behavior, he or she is willing to speak to them about it.

To evaluate the strength of your county's safety culture, you may want to survey your employees to find out how well you are doing on each of these factors.

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.

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