

# Construction Hazards and Risks Control

Lecture Title: – Building a Strong Safety Culture in Construction

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Undergraduate Diploma in  
Occupational Health and Safety

# Objectives

- **Generate a safety culture and raise awareness among workers and management regarding construction hazards and risk control.**



# What is a Safety Culture?

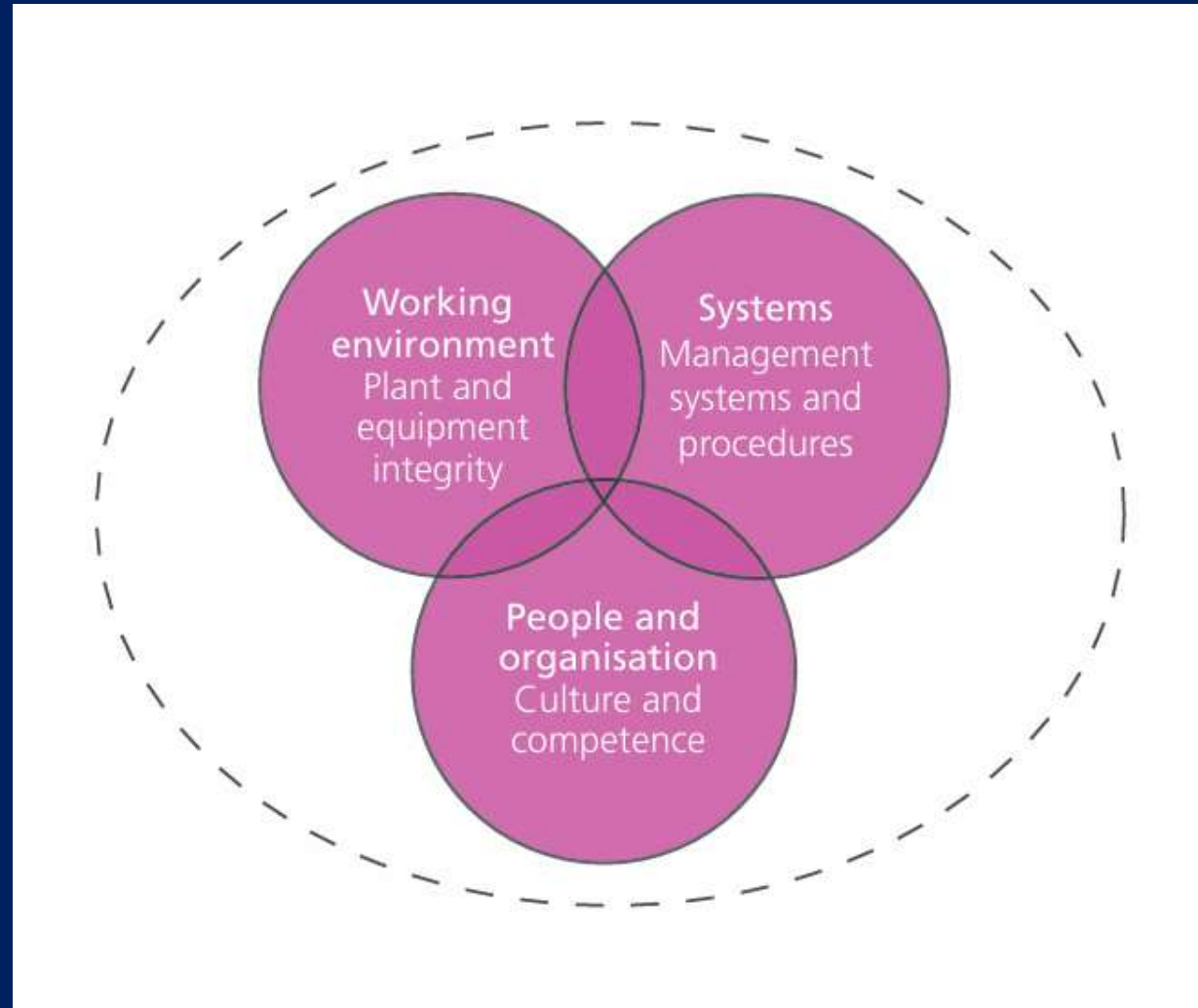
- Safety culture has been defined as consisting of shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with an organisation's structure and control systems to produce behavioural standards.



# Poor Safety Culture

- A poor culture encourages an atmosphere where not complying with safe working practices is acceptable, and it doesn't help the organisation to take effective action to solve health and safety problems.





# A positive safety culture has three key elements:

- Working practices and rules for effectively controlling hazards.
- A positive attitude towards risk management and compliance with the control processes.
- The capacity to learn from accidents, near misses and safety performance indicators and bring about continual improvement.



- Organisations also need credible and honest safety inspections and reports so that managers know where they need to concentrate their efforts.



# The Challenge...

- How to have a positive influence on an organisation's health and safety culture.
- It's hard to change the attitudes and beliefs of a workforce by direct persuasion, but by acting safely workers can start to think safely.
- Change requires time.





- This willingness will depend on how the organisation investigates incidents and how it handles blame.
- A blame culture – one that looks to blame and punish people when things go wrong – will encourage very little reporting

On the other hand.....

- A completely no-blame culture – one that allows all mistakes or errors to go unpunished, including those that are reckless or negligent – is not really feasible either, and probably won't be acceptable to the organisation or to individual workers.



# The best safety culture

- The best safety culture will be based on a fair allocation of responsibility. In this kind of culture, all but the most reckless health and safety failures can be reported without fear of retribution



# Identifying where you may need to improve your organisation's health and safety culture

- Safety climate surveys describe an organisation's culture using factors such as:-
- The degree of leadership in health and safety and the commitment to healthy and safe working that is demonstrated by senior managers (eg visibility and close contact with the 'shop floor')
- How much employees know and communicate about health and safety, how committed they are, and how reliably they attend health and safety training sessions
- The extent to which different levels of the workforce are involved in the health and safety improvement process



- The responsibility which employees show for their own and other people's health and safety
- The degree of tolerance of risk taking behaviour- how well good health and safety performance is measured and reinforced
- The arrangements for periodic reviews of health and safety culture and for implementing improvement plans



# Partnership working to improve health and safety culture

In a drive to reduce the number of workplace injuries, illnesses and unsafe behaviours, a gas utilities group incorporated its health and safety strategy into the overall business management plan. As well as establishing a 'partnership approach' involving employees and safety representatives, the company:

- updated staff each month on issues and improvements using photos and videos
- made sure that a manager and safety representative investigated lost-time injuries on the day of the incident, and that any lessons learned were quickly communicated to staff
- defined the role and responsibilities of line managers and supported them through a staff performance review process and safety management training
- set up a hotline for staff to make it easier for them to report incidents and hazards
- included health and safety on the agenda of all management meetings, and held frequent meetings between safety advisers, safety representatives and managers
- involved safety representatives in joint meetings, communications, training, investigations and inspections
- made sure that directors supported the scheme through good communication, attending management meetings and meeting staff members.

Major expenses invested in the process included £2.5 million for a 'safety charity challenge', where donations were made to charity when employees spotted and eliminated workplace hazards. The company also spent £600,000 on safety management and behaviour training. As a result, the company saw:

- an improved safety culture – including ownership at all levels, with commitment and competence to improve
- a reduction in accidents, incidents and injuries of over 80 per cent; lost-time injuries reduced from 35.5 per 1,000 staff to 6.6 over five years
- improved incident investigation and procedures to help prevent incidents happening again
- increased reporting and resolution of hazards and near misses
- a saving of around £4.5 million over four years through reduced lost-time injury rates, including costs from lost production, investigation and civil claims
- staff develop their health and safety leadership skills, which are transferable to other business performance areas
- a boost to staff morale and pride as a result of acknowledging their performance
- an improved reputation with stakeholders.



# Health and safety training and communicating information

A company in the electricity, gas and water industry described how it was training managers through 'Safe and unsafe act' (SUSA) discussions, facilitated by external consultants. One health and safety manager outlined how training line managers was backed up by basic behavioural safety training for staff:

"All our managers are trained in the SUSA technique now... But we're also putting every single one of our operators through a mini-SUSA... as well, so they can start to understand what... the manager is talking about when he's got this little blue book out and he starts to talk to them."

Another organisation also reported employing outside consultants. This company wanted external help to introduce a behavioural safety approach as a way to change culture. A senior manager from a construction company said:

"We're dealing with a company at the moment... and they have a different approach to health and safety. Rather than a policing aspect, it is changing culture, where they've done a lot of work on oil rigs, and had a lot of success where if something has gone wrong, you go out and meet people on the job and rather than giving them a bashing if they're doing something wrong, finding out why they're doing wrong. It's basically a

different approach, so we're actively dealing with [outside consultants] at the moment, who are specialists in that sort of field. So it's culture-based, trying to get a step change in culture."

A different approach to behavioural safety was demonstrated by a medium-sized manufacturing company. This example highlights how a focus on behavioural safety techniques doesn't necessarily require expensive external consultants. The company described its process of staff observation by in-house assessors – trained in behavioural safety – to identify 'unsafe behaviours' before they become 'unsafe acts':

"We've been running the behavioural safety process now since 2000... The reason why is that our health and safety performance went through a little bit of a shaky patch for a year or two and we realised that you can have procedures and systems but you also need to be doing other things. And the processes are very proactive – you're actually watching people doing jobs and giving feedback. So, you're watching them do things before there's any chance of getting hurt, really. If you think about accident investigation and near-miss reporting, they're things that you do after the event. The observations of behaviour are while people are doing tasks normally."



# Using the Health and Safety Climate Survey Tool

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) contacted three organisations that had used its generic Health and Safety Climate Survey Tool (CST) to obtain feedback. A nuclear fuels manufacturer reported that, in order to obtain a higher response rate, it had:

- programmed the work to make sure the schedule was achievable and it could report the results quickly
- publicised what it was doing and why, and set targets for response rates
- encouraged employees to complete the survey in work time and sent a letter with the CST reminding employees why it was being used
- guaranteed that responses would be treated anonymously and individual respondents wouldn't be identified
- gave respondents envelopes addressed to the contractor carrying out the data analysis, again to ensure anonymity
- created safety events to reinforce the reason for the CST and issued the survey immediately afterwards.

The company reported that the CST was extremely helpful in identifying gaps in health and safety arrangements and/or risk control, and that it had responded to these.

For example, the company:

- devised a training programme for supervisors after the CST showed that they weren't clear about their role in health and safety issues
- established teams to review instructions and procedures after the CST helped to identify that these were too technical and not appropriate. Work teams participated in safety-related activities and a sense of pride was created when simplified procedures were accepted and used as a template across the site. These teams also perceived managers as being committed to working together to improve safety and also that action was being taken as a result of the CST
- set up a site-wide 'learning from experience' database, which helped to communicate lessons learned from near misses or other safety-related activities
- committed itself to continuing to respond to issues raised by the CST
- reviewed the near-miss reporting system to ensure consistency across the site. The new system encouraged employees to report near misses in a 'no-blame' context and to take action as a result. Near misses are now regularly discussed at safety improvement team meetings.



# Health and Safety Culture Change

- This is not achieved quickly, and plans to improve an existing culture should take into account that it will have evolved over a long period.
- A culture change programme is also very unlikely to succeed unless senior managers are committed to leading the change.
- If you try to change a culture too quickly, you may just generate resistance to it.
- It's true that the direction of a culture often comes from senior managers, but it's important not to overlook influential people on the 'shop floor'.





- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5tJ5tLsIrE>



# What can we do to change the safety culture in our company?



# Gemba Walk

- The Gemba walk itself is a practice where leadership takes the time to regularly walk the floor where the “real work” is being done so that they can review and experience processes first-hand, see how departments operate and determine if everything is operating according to standards.



- What makes the Gemba walk unique is that it isn't done at random, like spot checks, nor is it intended to be a surprise inspection. Every Gemba walk is done with the purpose of observing operations and engaging with employees. In fact, employees will generally know when the Gemba walk will be taking place and are encouraged to discuss processes with leadership and provide their own operational insights.
- The Gemba walk goes hand-in-hand with the idea of the visual factory system — the use of signs, charts, labels and other visual communication tools to provide important information at the time and place it's needed. As management takes their Gemba walk, they should be able to easily pick up information from these signals about the state of current operations. They can discuss any current issues with workers on the floor, ask follow-up questions and take notes for review later.



# Training to middle management

- Training management in safety offers numerous benefits that enhance both workplace culture and operational efficiency. Firstly, it equips leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and mitigate risks, thereby reducing the likelihood of accidents and injuries. This proactive approach fosters a safer work environment, which can lead to increased employee morale and productivity..



- Additionally, trained managers are better prepared to communicate safety protocols effectively, ensuring that all team members are aware of best practices and compliance requirements. This not only promotes accountability but also encourages a culture of open dialogue about safety concerns. Furthermore, investing in safety training can enhance the organization's reputation, demonstrating a commitment to employee well-being and corporate responsibility. Ultimately, effective safety training for management drives continuous improvement and supports the long-term sustainability of the organization



The most important thing is to Lead by Example





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