

# SAFETY LEADERSHIP TRAINING

## Nine Safe Habit Tools

By David G. Lynn

**Does your company put people in roles with inadequate preparation to lead safety? Sometimes great employees are promoted to a supervisor role, then struggle to lead the safety aspect of the job. They may understand the technical nature of the supervisor role but not know how to lead people to work safely.**

**They may have the desire** to prevent injuries, but not know how to accomplish that goal.

Safety leadership training should teach tactical skills that supervisors can use to prevent injuries. Managers and supervisors should learn how to approach others, deliver a safety topic, train people, mentor new hires, preplan work, benefit from lessons learned, identify hazards, evaluate events and hold people accountable. That may sound like a fairy-tale list of skills, but it is possible if we deliver safety leadership training that cultivates these critical skills.

### Safety Leadership Training Content

Following are nine safe habit tools that should be part of an effective safety leadership training class.

1) Approaching others. Include a module that highlights the value of hazard recognition and the importance of saying something when you see risk. One might think this basic skill comes naturally to people but it does not. We must develop an approaching-others mentality with managers and supervisors.

2) Deliver good toolbox topics. Managers and supervisors should take advantage of weekly safety meetings and communicate safety messages on a consistent basis. Teach people how to deliver a good safety topic and to raise situational awareness. A good delivery is needed to keep a group's attention.

3) Provide training and development. Training does not simply happen. A manager and supervisor must know what training workers need and when. They must understand how critical their support and visibility are to the success of the training. And they must reinforce what people learn.

4) Mentor new employees. Good leaders are approachable, and they coach people in the field. Teach managers and supervisors how to mentor new employees. Explain how they can set up and execute a new-hire mentoring program and create a learning environment.

5) Preplan work. The best leaders know the principle of "planning your work and working your plan," and understand how that principle applies to safety. Teach managers and supervisors to create effective prejob briefs. They must plan the steps, anticipate errors, think about the worst case and put controls in place.

6) Conduct postjob reviews (lessons learned). A good plan is important, but events

**TABLE 1**  
**BUILDING SAFE HABITS**

Tool/technique	Trigger/cue	Routine	Reward
Approach others	Anticipated hazard	Minute by minute	Injury prevention
Toolbox topics	Upcoming work	Weekly	Situational awareness
Train and develop	Starting the job	Before the need	More knowledge
Mentor	New hire	First 90 days	Better skills
Prejob brief	Before you start	Daily	Fewer mistakes
Postjob review	End of the day	Daily	Better plan tomorrow
Audit and inspect	Starting the job	Daily	Fewer hazards
Event analysis	Event occurrence	As needed	Learn from mistakes
Disciplinary action	Noncompliance	As needed	Accountability

may not go as planned. Teach managers and supervisors to learn from mistakes. Show them how to implement a simple review process at the end of the shift so they can talk about what went right and what went wrong. The recap will help the team perform better the next day.

7) Audit and inspect. Every manager and supervisor should know how to audit and inspect their areas of responsibility. Teach them good hazard recognition skills so they see what you want them to see. Give them the tools to implement a documented weekly safety audit plan.

8) Analyze events. Teach managers and supervisors how to analyze events that have the potential to cause injuries. Their goal is to learn what tools and techniques failed so they can make improvements. These improvements should influence the future in a positive way.

9) Hold people accountable. This is a manager's or supervisor's greatest tool and responsibility. They need to know the importance of disciplinary action and how to hold people accountable. Safety leadership training should make this point clear.

### Building Safe Habits

These nine skills can be cultivated with training, but how can they become habitual and ingrained into daily routines? Duhigg (2012) says, "new habits are created by putting together a cue, a routine and a reward." This habit loop creates a natural craving to repeat the activity. The habit loop has the power to

influence safe decisions and it can have a positive impact on our judgment.

Teach managers and supervisors to apply safe habit tools at the right times. Develop the expectation to apply these tools whenever leaders encounter certain triggers and cues. Promote the value and reward of the techniques and apply them with repetition. This process takes focus in the beginning; after people get used to the routine, these techniques become second nature (i.e., safe habit). Table 1 illustrates this process for building the nine safe habits to improve safety performance.

Safety leadership training is like using GPS, with a starting point and a desired destination. To reach the destination (i.e., safe culture) you must follow the path. Each safe habit you develop with your supervisors is a marker on the path. Once you develop these nine habits, you reach the safe culture destination.

The goal is to prepare people to lead safety so that they do not struggle to prevent injuries. Supervisors know the technical nature of their jobs and we have to help them understand how safe habits impact the details of their work. Building these nine safe habit tools into their work activities will improve their opportunity to succeed. Safety leadership is all about influence; what better way to influence safe actions? **PSJ**

### References

Duhigg, C. (2012). *The power of habit*. New York, NY: Random House.

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