

# 7 Ineffective Safety Practices (and what to do instead!)

Organizations rely on science for most areas of their business, but few use it to manage what people do around safety. The science of behavior is proven and delivers the criteria to evaluate and apply safety solutions for maximum impact.

## WHAT'S WRONG

### **FOCUSING ON LAGGING INDICATORS**

**Reactive.** Lagging metrics drive reactive safety management—action taken only when there is a problem.

### **INJURY BASED INCENTIVE SYSTEMS**

**Misplaced reinforcement.**  
Can reinforce non-reporting and avoiding injury through sheer luck.

### **AWARENESS TRAINING**

**Necessary but not sufficient.**  
Training alone will not change behavior. Retraining rarely solves safety problems.

### **MOTIVATIONAL SIGNS**

**Little to no impact.** Short-term effect, at best. Signs are ignored within days of posting.

### **BLAME AND DISCIPLINE**

**Destructive to relationships and engagement.** Discipline is often misused. Leads to underreporting and 'us vs. them' culture.

### **DISCOURAGING NEAR-MISS REPORTING**

**Treating near misses like incidents.**  
Leads to blame, fear, and avoidance of reporting.

### **SAFETY COP**

**Focus on what is wrong.** Safety tours and interactions that focus on pointing out what is wrong undermines engagement.

## WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

### **FOCUS ON LEADING INDICATORS**

**Proactive.** Measure and manage leading indicators—what people are doing each day to prevent incidents/accidents.

### **BEHAVIOR-BASED REINFORCEMENT SYSTEMS**

**Reinforce correct behavior.** Identify and strengthen high-impact behaviors at all levels to ensure sustainable safety improvement.

### **NEEDS-BASED TRAINING**

**Better analysis leads to correct solution.** *Can't do*—train to fluency. *Won't do*—change the consequences.

### **MOTIVATIONAL CONSEQUENCES**

**Actions speak louder than words.**  
Demonstrate commitment to safety through actions and consequences, not signs.

### **ANALYSIS AND ACTION**

**Create forward-looking accountability.** Build joint accountability for corrective actions rather than blaming.

### **ENCOURAGING NEAR-MISS REPORTING**

**Approach near misses as learning opportunities.** Leads to collaborative problem solving and willingness to report.

### **SAFETY COACH**

**Build on what is right.** Shaping improvements through positive reinforcement strengthens safe behavior and builds engagement.



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