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CONSTRUCTION PROJECT SAFETY STAFF

Success in Achieving Zero Employee Injury Requires Proper Safety Staffing and Utilization.

Proper Safety Staffing and Utilization in a Zero Injury Safety Culture

In order for a "zero injury" culture of safety to exist it must be provided with two things according to the Construction Industry Institute (CII): 1. aggressive "line management leadership" in implementing the zero injury safety technology and 2. "safety expertise" for mentoring and coaching on zero injury best practices, orientation on safety and the zero injury concept, general safety training, safety planning oversight, safety inspections and safety audits along with incident/injury investigation and safety communication. The impressive safety responsibilities listed in (2.) above are primarily the domain of safety staff. Regarding staff organizations one should use care not to label the head of the safety support function as "Safety Manager." Such a title for safety staff is not advisable for two reasons: a. implies that the job assignment is managing safety when in fact "managing safety" in a zero injury culture is the distinct role of "line management," never safety staff and b. even in organizations where line management is routinely in charge of managing safety the use of a Safety Manager title would constantly send a confusing message to the employees. Acceptable titles include Safety Director, Safety Representative, Safety Staff, and Safety Specialist.

In zero injury cultures, safety staff is charged with safety support (training/education/orientation) and oversight (inspections/audits/compliance) only. It is line management's job to insure all work has a safety plan and is executed according to accepted safe work execution practices.

The number of safety staff needed to support a zero injury culture was found by CII research to be somewhere in the range of one safety staff individual to every 50 to 100 project employees. The lower ratio of 1 to 50 applies when rapid build up of large project workforces is in progress to insure efficient coverage of safety education, training and orientation while at the same time maintaining oversight of all safety support staff responsibilities for the execution of the work itself. Many factors impinge on the decision as to how many safety staff are needed: type of work, geographic area to be covered, amount of orientation, education, safety training contemplated, safety inspections and audits planned, the number of shifts being worked, etc.

Further, the top corporate safety staff position should report directly to the top corporate leader as peer to the top operational executives. This relationship of the safety function to the top empowers the safety staff to function independent of operations staff and thereby fill the safety oversight role more effectively. In the field organizations the safety personnel can and should have a clear secondary reporting relationship (sometimes referred to as "dotted line") to the local operations personnel in order to properly fulfill the safety support role.

NAC Safety White Papers

Through the Position Papers on Safety, the National Academy of Construction has summarized for corporate executives the practices being successfully applied by others and is recommending that American businesses in and outside construction investigate and use the safety research of CII. Many

users of CII safety research have achieved consecutive work-hours exceeding one million without an OSHA/BLS Recordable injury.

The nine research-based CII Zero Injury safety leadership categories are:

- 1. Demonstrated Management Safety Commitment;
- 2. Staffing for Safety;
- 3. Safe Work Planning, Pre-Project and Pre-Task;
- 4. Safety Education, Orientation and Specialized Training;
- 5. Employee Involvement, Behavior Safety and Safety Perception Surveys;
- 6. Evaluation and Recognition of Safety Performance;
- 7. Contractor Selection and Management;
- 8. Accident/Incident Investigation Including Near Misses;
- 9. Drug and Alcohol Testing.

NAC Safety Paper (SP) No. 1 emphasized the importance of proactive attitudes about safety; No. 2 reveals that one company by using these CII research findings achieved 4,649,000 continuous work hours without a recordable injury; No. 3 lists the above nine critical Zero Injury Safety Management Categories; No. 4 discusses "Demonstrated Management Safety Commitment;" No. 5 discusses "Staffing for Safety"; No. 6 covers "Safe Work Planning;" No. 7 covers "Safety Education"; No. 8 covers "Employee Involvement"; No. 9 covers "Evaluation and Recognition of Safety Performance;" No. 10 covers "Contractor Selection and Management;" No. 11 covers "Accident/Incident Investigations Including Near Misses;" No. 12 covers "Drug and Alcohol Testing;" No. 13 recognizes the National Maintenance Policy Committee for their Zero Injury Safety award process and No.14 "Taking Safety Commitment to the Next Level."

The ROI of Zero Injury Safety Performance

The Construction Industry Institute research has proven that while the cost of implementing the nine CII zero injury categories is high, it is returned at a rate of 400% to 500% per annum when compared to the costs of OSHA/BLS injury rate average performance for the entire construction industry in America. When implemented properly the Zero Injury Safety Leadership concept results in injury becoming very rare events.

Information and details on the increasingly popular "Zero Injury Safety Leadership Concept" are available from the following source: Construction Industry Institute, 3925 W. Braker Lane (R4500), Austin, TX 78759-5316 Ph (512) 232-3004.

www.construction-institute.org See the NAC website at www.naocon.org for copies of the Safety Whitepaper series.

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