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## S A F E T Y

### **The Zero Injury Safety Question of the 21st Century:** **“Are you ready to Change yet?”**

Fact: Change is a necessary element of progress in any field. One could say that “positive change,” straightens, levels and paves, the highways of progress. The positive effect of such a “change for progress” in Construction safety as measured by BLS/OSHA incidence rates has been substantial over the past two decades. In 1991 the all industry BLS/OSHA recordable injury rate was at 13.0 per 100 workers per year; in 2010 the rate was 4.0, an improvement of 69%. The root of this improvement has been the willingness for corporate leaders to “change” how employee safety is managed.

The “change” has been to add to the OSHA compliance driven safety something new called “leading indicators.” The BLS/OSHA injury rates cited above are known by those knowledgeable in construction safety matters as “lagging indicators.” To operate a safety program in the “lagging indicator” format is to place emphasis on those equipment, tools and hardware problems that have in the past caused injuries; i.e., improper scaffolding techniques, not using fall protection devices, not securing objects at elevation to ensure they are not dislodged and fall endangering those below.

Many corporate leaders are now using the CII concept of “leading indicators” to create their safety cultures. “Leading indicators” can be defined as the measureable things one can do for, with and through your people that are safety culture building in nature. The way to empower “people centered safety” is to allow your people to become involved (staff and hourly) in the design of the safety culture content around and centered on the avoidance of “at-risk” behavior. Leaders can be just as at fault in using at-risk behavior in the decisions they make in planning the work as the craft personnel are in the decisions they make in executing the work. Those who have added “leading indicators” as a part of their safety emphasis labeled OSHA compliance as the ‘Hard Side of Safety’ and have labeled the use of “leading indicators” as “The Soft Side of Safety.” “Hard” refers to the hardware of construction. The “soft” refers to the “people” involved.

Emphasizing the “soft” side of safety requires placing the “people and their well-being first” in creating a culture where being and working safe is the primary emphasis each and every day in everyone’s approach to accomplishing the work to be done. Placing people first is more than putting safety first. When people are placed first in a “leading indicator environment,” zero injury safety results is the natural byproduct and all other considerations such as cost, production and schedule are viewed as second tier concerns. This is not to say that being second tier is not

important because all know that cost, production and schedule requirements must be met for a project to be successful. It is not rocket science for your people to know the importance of a successful project. It seems it is human nature that your people want to excel when they have been made aware that beyond all other things they and they alone comprise the first tier. These firms readily believe that their employees are their greatest asset.

It is now well known that there is a publicly available battery of “leading indicator” injury prevention strategy based on pure academic led research that if used effectively does in fact predict a zero injury outcome. This research was performed for the construction industry by The Construction Industry Institute (CII), Austin, Texas. After visiting, studying and performing detailed safety analysis of 122 projects utilizing hundreds of contractors the CII researchers surfaced nine major categories of leading indicator leadership techniques that were producing the very best in safety performance, with some results being zero. These are as follows:

I. 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.

Within these nine major categories are the building block items” that when used in an informed manner have been shown to result in a zero injury outcome for one million hours and more. The “building block items” are predominately of a type one could call “people focused technologies.” The term “technologies” is used to bring a proper focus to these “items.” Each category has within its’ successful implementation details that when closely examined are but socially technical, people focused, safety activities on how to go about a proper implementation of the category. Sometimes these details are to be carried out by line employees, other times by line managers, and sometimes by the safety staff and not a few times by top company leadership.

Zero injury defies the law of probability because we know zero injury is not statistically probable. HOWEVER, if one takes the shorter term view; one where we are trying to work injury free for “this project” then it becomes not only probable but because it is happening so often we cannot but conclude such is definitely ”possible.” This simple fact highlights the following;

**“The potential of zero injury for the long term not being statistically probable, does not remove the potential of zero injury for the short term being statistically possible!”**

So the questions before most leaders in industry today who are struggling to stop useless injury are simply these; “Are you ready yet?” “Are you ready for a positive change?” “Are you ready to use the research proven Zero Injury Safety Leadership Concept?” “Are you ready to capitalize on the 500% ROI that comes with the successful application of the CII research to your safety program?” “Are you ready to do the right thing about employee injury and learn how others are working millions of hours with Zero Employee BLS/OSHA Recordable Injuries?”

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Chair NAC, Safety Committee

Information on working injury free is available from: [www.construction-institute.com](http://www.construction-institute.com) or [www.naocon.org](http://www.naocon.org) or simply do an internet search for the two words “zero+injury” to find other sources of information and or assistance.

#### **NAC Safety White Papers**

Through its Position White Papers on Safety, the National Academy of Construction is recommending that American businesses investigate the research of the Construction Industry Institute (CII) into how increasing numbers of employers are able to achieve a million work hours and more without an OSHA Recordable injury. See the NAC web site [www.naocon.org](http://www.naocon.org) for previous Safety White Papers.

#### **The ROI of Zero Injury Safety Performance**

The Construction Industry Institute research has proved that the cost of successfully implementing the nine CII zero injury categories is returned at a rate of 400 to 500% per annum when compared to the costs of OSHA/BLS injury rate average performance (4.7 TRIR in 2008) for the entire construction industry in the United States of America.

Information and details on the increasingly popular “Zero Injury Safety Leadership Concept” is available from the following: Construction Industry Institute, 3925 W. Braker Lane (R4500), Austin, TX 78759-5316, Ph (512) 232-3004, [www.construction-institute.org](http://www.construction-institute.org). See the NAC website at [www.naocon.org](http://www.naocon.org) for copies of the NAC Safety Whitepaper series.

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