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S A F E T Y

Finding Success in Near-Miss Reporting

Faithful employee reporting and leader investigation of all injuries and near-misses was found as an essential safety learning precursor to zero injury outcomes in the use of the Zero Injury research of the Construction Industry Institute, (CII) Austin, TX. While most projects studied in the CII research were logging near-misses, many were not adequately providing near-miss reporting and investigation information to the employees in a manner that promoted the reports requested.

The CII research found the safest projects had the most near-misses reported! The “why” of this relationship is explained by the following logic. Experience has shown when near-misses are being effectively reported on a project it is because the leadership have created a non-threatening near-miss reporting environment. Workers on the alert for a near-miss to report are focused on doing their work in a safe risk-free manner. Feedback from the investigations encourages more near-miss reports.

The CII research cited three requirements that “set the stage” for effective near-miss reporting and investigations. These are:

1. The project maintains an effective near-miss reporting process.
2. A formal documented system exists to report near-misses.
 - i. Defines a near-miss in simple terms.
 - ii. Reporting paperwork is not oppressive.
3. Workers are encouraged to report near-misses.
 - i. Reports are openly welcomed.
 - ii. Recognition provided to workers.
 - iii. Workers receive feedback on investigation outcomes.

While a majority of construction leaders and workers realize the importance of near-miss reporting, CII research has shown that most projects are not successful in achieving effective near-miss reporting, investigation and feedback.

The question is “Why?” NAC shares the following insight for consideration, while the *occurrence* of a near-miss is an “unwanted” event; the *reporting* of a near-miss is a “wanted” event. It is in the managing of this conflict that success can be found. If the first reaction of a leader when a near-miss is reported is a response of “What? Not again!” followed by obvious anguish even to the point of demonstrated anger, then near-miss reports will be stifled. This scenario is severely aggravated in the case where the preceding expressions are seen/heard by the reporting employee. In these circumstances one can be sure that few to no additional near-miss reports will be forthcoming from that individual. Soon the “word gets around” and most near-misses go unreported especially those from the crafts.

The answer to near-miss “report receiving” success lies in Behavior Based Safety. Training must be provided to all employees, CEO to the foremen and superintendents who receive near-miss reports to “always” respond (Behave) positively when made aware of a near-miss. “Always” compliment the reporting individual in an earnest and sincere manner; then depend on the sharing of the investigation details to teach all employees that once again a lesson has been learned that can be used to protect all from similar future unwanted events.

NAC position paper provided by the NAC Safety Committee: Emmitt J. Nelson, PE, Chair

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. 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.

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 (4.70 TRIR in 2010) 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. See the NAC website at www.naocon.org for copies of the NAC Safety Whitepaper series.

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