



3 TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE & SUSTAINABLE SAFETY CULTURE



Tip #1:

Use safety assessments to engage employees

A recent EHS Today article takes a look at a potential solution for involving people across an organization in the process of building a culture of workplace safety: safety assessments.

Where static surveys may be seen as yet another safety-related requirement, focus group-based assessments followed by the completion of self-assessments are more likely to drive engagement and add value.

To Build Safety Culture, You Must Get People Talking provides an overview of a Safety Leadership Conference session—"Distracted Drivers R US — Assessment RX for Success"—led by Walter Fluharty, vice president of EHS and organizational development at Ohio-based Simon Roofing.

"Instead of just ticking things off a checklist, assessments bring people from across the organization together to take stock, do some soul-searching and make improvements," writes Laura Putre as she summarizes what Fluharty sees as the difference between assessments and audits. "And they are different from surveys, which don't allow for additional questions and often have a low participation rate."

Key factors in the successful introduction of safety assessments

The main key is to make assessments more human, with the more people involved, the better. According to Fluharty, this means including at least 20% of the workforce in "focus groups" for the discussion of open-ended questions.

A number of other factors are likely to contribute to making assessments matter. These include:

- Breaking focus groups down by specific locations and/or roles
- Understanding how to handle participants who take up too much of the conversation
- Excluding direct supervisors from an assessment to ensure that employees feel comfortable and aren't fearful of retaliation
- Including anonymous self-assessments that encourage employees to continue thinking about safe workplace behavior

Rather than merely handing out self-assessments, organizations should aim for active facilitation. The EHS Today article cites Fluharty's suggestion that distribution of self-assessments be accompanied by an explanation of why they matter.

- When setting up self-assessment or audit questions, system administrators can configure online and mobile forms for specific locations, groups, or roles.
- Automated workflow tools streamline virtually any process. For example, automated notifications, tasks, and reminders—sent via email or displayed in dashboard widgets—can be set up to help reduce administrative overhead and foster accountability.
- Integrated dashboards, reports, and graphs provide users with the ability to analyze and take strategic action based on self assessment and audit response data.

Combine audits and assessments to fully engage employees and measure success

Assessments (and self-assessments) may be a more effective solution for fully engaging employees and driving home the behaviors that contribute to a culture of safety. Audits can certainly be the right tool to measure success and understand where improvements are needed. A combination of the two is likely to prove the most valuable and have the greatest impact.

Using both audits and self-assessments to build a culture of safety and measure results succeeds with the right technology in place. With Origami Risk, risk and safety professionals can take both their self-assessment and audit processes to the next level.

- Origami Risk's intuitive data collection tools can be tailored to meet the nuanced requirements of any organization.



Tip #2:

Remove barriers to reporting incidents and near misses

The importance of reporting near misses and incidents is clear. The OSHA and National Safety Council Alliance, a cooperative program, puts it this way: "History has shown repeatedly that most loss producing events (incidents), both serious and catastrophic, were preceded by warnings or near miss incidents. Recognizing and reporting near miss incidents can significantly improve worker safety and enhance an organization's safety culture." Effective near miss programs can prevent more serious incidents from occurring.

The OSHA article provides the following list of best practices:

- Leadership must establish a reporting culture that reinforces every opportunity to identify and control hazards, reduce risk, and prevent harmful incidents.
- Investigate near miss incidents to identify the root cause and the weaknesses in the system that resulted in the circumstances that led to the near miss.

- Use investigation results to improve safety systems, hazard control, risk reduction, and lessons learned. All of these represent opportunity for training, feedback on performance, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Near miss reporting is vitally important to preventing serious, fatal, and catastrophic incidents that are less frequent but far more harmful than other incidents.

Loss reduction efforts and improvements in safe workplace behavior require the cooperation of everyone in an organization. When incidents and near misses aren't reported, injuries occur that might have been prevented—at a significant cost to injured employees, their families and communities, and their employers. An effective approach to near miss and incident management encourages an expansion in the reporting of both near misses and incidents and near misses by both workers and their supervisors. This means any obstacles to reporting must first be removed.

Removing the obstacles

Authors of an academic study found a significant amount of published research related to organizational design guidelines for setting up incident reporting programs. Yet they uncovered far less research covering the reasons for the failure on the part of workers to report incidents. What they were able to find was grouped in four factors:

- Practicality – Reporting takes too much time or is too difficult
- Fear – Retribution from their employer or the negative reaction of others
- Pointlessness – The perception that management takes no notice and is unlikely to act in relation to the problem
- Risk acceptance – The falsely held belief that incidents are part of the job and cannot be prevented; or the perception that "it won't happen to me"

These are echoed in Reporting and Using Near-miss Events to Improve Patient Safety in Diverse Primary Care Practices: A Collaborative Approach to Learning from Our Mistakes, which found that common concerns include "the additional workload burden, concern over punitive action, lack of confidence that positive change will result, and psychological barriers to admitting an error."

There is no quick fix when it comes to addressing the factors that inhibit reporting. However, taking a number of practical steps that include making it easier to submit reports (addressing practicality) and allowing for anonymous reporting (reducing fear) can be a foundation upon which to build an effective safety program. With more data to draw from, the ability of risk managers and safety professionals to identify, analyze, and take strategic action to reduce the likelihood of injury is vastly improved. Over time, this can contribute to a break down in perceptions of uselessness and acceptance of risk.

Using the right RMIS can help change the culture

Simplify the process

The National Safety Council (NSC) resource on developing near miss reporting suggests, "Make the reporting system easy to understand and use." Anonymous, customized forms allow your organization to collect only the information required (shorter forms = more submissions), and tailor the instructions and labels to fit each location, role, or business unit. Forms should be designed so that workers capture information quickly and return to their job right away.

Involve leadership

Safety and Health Magazine writes, "Leadership buy-in is critical. Those at the top need to establish a reporting culture that reinforces the importance of identifying and controlling hazards at every opportunity." To do this, create tailored reporting for leadership that allows them to easily communicate what efforts have been tried and what the results are.

Measure employee education effectiveness

Aside from ensuring that each employee fully understands the reporting process, employees also need to be educated on the importance of how near miss reports help keep their teammates safe. Flexible audit technology can track how effectively training is being delivered, if it is focused on the most critical issues, and which parts of the organization may not be complying.

Focus on results

How to Improve Your Near Miss Reporting states, "The best reinforcer for reporting a near miss is to know it helped others avoid getting hurt, or improved safety in some way. The worst-case scenario is near miss reports that appear to go into the organizational black hole, never to be seen or heard about again." Automated reports and custom portals can push the results of actions taken due to near miss reporting down to operational supervisors. This allows each line manager to communicate the impact that near miss reporting has on safety. With the obstacles holding your organization back identified and removed, you can make it easier to act on near miss data and prevent the next workplace incident.

Collect better data

Visual data such as images and annotated sketches can provide additional, more actionable information for those investigating incidents. By preventing back-and-forth requests for clarification, visual elements can shorten the process and eliminate cycles.

Get data from the field

The ability to input incident and near miss data while in the field can be a critical part of the process. Narrowing the time before investigations are conducted is essential as Kipp Rowland, Senior Risk Improvement Representative for EMC Insurance Companies notes:

"Conduct near-miss investigations within 24 to 48 hours of the incident, while people's memories are fresh about what happened and how the incident could have been prevented."

Mobile reporting reduces lag time and helps investigations begin faster.

Origami Risk near miss reporting solutions

Origami Risk offers an integrated solution that includes customizable forms, anonymous entry, mobile incident collection, and the ability to easily attach photos or sketches to a form. Additionally, robust reporting and automated workflow ensure that everyone from the c-suite to the warehouse floor can see the impacts of near miss reporting. Flexible audit functionality tracks both near miss training and compliance with corrective actions.

An effective near miss culture can be a tremendous asset for any organization. Fewer employee safety incidents and reduced property losses are two of the many benefits. With the right solution, your organization can make it easier to act on near miss data and prevent the next incident.



Tip #3:

Employ technology to improve safety efforts and promote a safety culture

For organizations of any size, driving a culture of safety through the active engagement of employees through the use of self-assessments, safety audits, and near miss/incident reporting can be improved with the right technology in place.

An integrated risk and safety solution like Origami Risk extends the options available to employees for performing assessments and audits and reporting near misses/incidents where they occur—in the field or on the factory floor.

- Origami Risk's intuitive data collection tools can be tailored to meet the nuanced requirements of any organization.
- When setting up self-assessments, audit questions, and near miss/incident intake forms, system administrators can configure online and mobile forms for specific locations, groups, or roles.
- Welcome pages can be configured to include a company logo along with any special instructions that may be necessary. Users simply click a link to access. There is no need to remember a username or password and entries remain anonymous.
- Pages can also be configured to confirm successful submission and provide additional information or instructions.

- Documents, photos, videos, and sketches that provide additional detail can be attached to entries.

Additionally, using Origami Risk, risk managers and safety professionals can introduce new efficiencies and eliminate the silos of data that often exist when a combination of legacy systems, spreadsheets, and paper forms are used.

- Automated workflow tools can be used to streamline virtually any process. For example, automated notifications, tasks, and reminders—sent via email or displayed in dashboard widgets—can be set up to help reduce administrative overhead and foster accountability.
- Integrated dashboards, reports, and graphs provide users with the ability to analyze and take strategic action based on collected data.

An effective and sustainable safety culture can be a tremendous asset for any organization. Fewer workplace injuries and reduced losses are two of the many benefits. With the right solution, your organization can make it easier to engage employees as it collects and acts on critical safety data.



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About Origami Risk

Origami Risk is an integrated platform for risk, safety, and compliance. Origami's EHS suite, available on web and mobile, allows clients to drive visibility into safety data and initiatives in a single, centralized system. Learn more about the EHS Suite [here](#) or contact us at ehs@origamirisk.com.

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