



Best Practice Quick Guide

Leading Indicators

Leading indicators – measurable factors preceding a future event used to drive and measure injury prevention and control activities – continue to be a key area of interest in the field of environmental, health and safety (EHS). For best practices in leading indicators, we turn to four members of the Campbell Institute to describe one leading indicator their organization tracks, and how it has affected their safety outcomes.

Cummins

When launching its leading indicator program five years ago, recent Campbell Award winner Cummins started by tracking training hours. After twelve months of data collection, Cummins found that an increase in training hours was associated with a decline in incidence rate. A deeper inquiry revealed that specific training in risk assessment and job safety analysis was the primary influence behind the impact on incidence rate. Despite this strong correlation, Cummins identifies custom indicators for different sites and reevaluates leading indicators every year, keeping its program up-to-date and evergreen.

Honeywell

About five years ago, Honeywell modified its Safety Observation System, making it available in nearly twenty languages and accessible to all employees across the organization. The new system allowed employees at any level to report not only near misses and incidents, but also any unsafe behaviors and conditions. Through the Safety Observation System, Honeywell essentially created thousands of “eyes and ears” to provide timely and detailed information on potential safety hazards. The correlation of safety observations with injury rate is clear – their Building Solutions business unit reduced the number of recordable injuries from 108 in 2010 to 54 in 2013. During this same time period, the number of safety observations increased nearly one hundred percent.

USG

A crucial leading indicator at USG is the Safety Activity Rating (SAR), which is essentially an audit of a USG site by plant managers, employees and supervisors from a different USG location. Because the SAR team is comprised of individuals who do not work at that particular location, the team can conduct an unbiased audit of site operations and also mentally benchmark the site’s processes against what takes place in their home facility. Besides the reduction in injury rate that USG has seen, a major outcome of the SAR has been a heightened awareness of safety among employees.

Fluor

In 2012, Fluor revamped its Corporate HSE Audit Tool to put more emphasis on leading indicators. After the initial six-month audit, the leading indicator

that showed the greatest need for improvement was “management in action.” This finding led to managers’ increased involvement in more safety activities, including participation in field worker orientation, weekly site walk-throughs and steering regular safe work planning sessions. Six months later, as a result of management involvement, “management in action” became the highest scoring indicator in the Corporate Audit.

Putting the pieces together

These examples provide a glimpse into the best practices of world-class organizations regarding leading indicators. Honeywell’s example demonstrates that recording and tracking safety observations creates more vigilant employees, and USG’s story shows that involving operational employees in site audits creates opportunities for sharing best practices and makes safety everyone’s responsibility. Fluor’s example demonstrates the importance of leadership engagement to improve site safety and promote a positive safety culture. Lastly, Cummins’ story shows that even highly predictive leading indicators need to be reevaluated on a regular basis. A “perfect mix” of leading indicators just doesn’t exist.

While every organization is unique and at a different point in the safety journey, these short examples provide insight into how leading indicators are developed and used to improve safety outcomes. For more information on leading indicators and best practices from the Campbell Institute, visit www.thecampbellinstitute.org.

Takeaways:

- World-class organizations of the Campbell Institute use leading indicators to help shape their safety culture.
- Cummins found a correlation between a higher number of training hours and a decline in incidence rate.
- Honeywell engaged all employees in hazard recognition through a Safety Observation System, greatly reducing its recordable injuries.
- USG had employees evaluate safety at separate plant locations for an objective viewpoint.
- Fluor’s Corporate HSE Audit Tool showed that management action is a highly regarded leading indicator.
- Ultimately, what’s right for one organization might not be perfect fit for another. These best practices, however, can guide you along the way.

National Safety Council

1121 SPRING LAKE DRIVE, ITASCA, IL 60143-3201 | (800) 621-7619 | nsc.org

0715 900007608 © 2015 National Safety Council

members get more

