



Making or Breaking Your Safety Program

The safety drill and safety meeting are over. Demonstrations are finished; the video is rewinding; and handouts are distributed. Now the real test begins. Will the crew put the information into practice by acting safely?

The odds that workers will buy into the company and vessel safety program increase when these three critical characteristics of a strong safety culture as recommended by the American Society of Safety Engineers are present:

1. Upper management (afloat and ashore) demonstrates a commitment to safety.

When workers see top management actively involved – from senior officer attendance at safety drills and safety meetings to shore management responses to crew safety concerns – employees are more likely to feel safety is a company and vessel priority. Without commitment and enthusiastic leadership from all levels of management, the safety management system isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

2. Incentives that reward safe behavior.

Putting the emphasis on safe behaviors such as notable participation in a safety drill/demonstration or spotting hazards gives workers more control over safety.

3. Involvement of temporary workers or subcontractors in the safety program.

The nature of the marine industry dictates that many people assigned to a vessel are transient. But, even when you know workers won't be there long, it pays to draw them into the safety program. For example ask them at safety meetings to share an accident story or any lessons they have learned from another company or vessel that highlights the need for safe work practices or provides a different look at a common area of concern.

It's the little things that make or break a safety program. One person can't do it all. Safety is a team effort.

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