



Safety As Easy As Pie

In reality, safety is not quite as easy as pie, but a good, effective safety program must have all the pieces in order to make a whole pie. A quality safety program is made of many elements or “slices,” and if one slice is missing, efforts at safety and incident prevention will not be complete.

Facets of a good safety program include training and recordkeeping, proper equipment, communication, compliance, supervisor involvement, inspection, a disciplinary process, and support from the organization. If any of these are lacking, a greater likelihood of incident and/or loss will exist. These “ingredients” are essential to making a properly done and tasty pie.

Perhaps the most important ingredient is that of support from management and the organization as a whole. If the organization is not committed to protecting its employees by implementing and supporting incident prevention measures, any steps that may be taken will not be effective if they are merely window dressing. The company must be morally and ethically committed to protecting its employees and must also be prepared, in financial terms, to provide the tools, safety equipment and training. It doesn't take much money, and it is money well-spent. In the safety world, the old adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” couldn't be more accurate.

Equally important to a successful safety program is supervisor involvement. These men and women have the most frequent contact with their workers and must make efforts to spend time with them in the field. By performing driving evaluations and on-site safety inspections, the supervisor can get to know his or her workers on a personal basis and can determine if they are behaving in an acceptable and safe manner. Supervisors should make at least a quarterly on-site visit with each of their workers.

All of the safety policies, procedures and practices in the world are not worth the paper they're printed on if workers ignore them. Repeated violations of safety rules witnessed in the field or multiple incidents must be addressed. While disciplinary measures are no fun for anyone, neither is injury or even death.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is an incentive program by which workers are rewarded for safe behavior. There are many ways to reward an individual for working safely and reporting near misses, and it need not be costly. Often, merely recognizing a safe worker in a public forum will go a long way in promoting safe work practices. While some may say, “Our employees are already being paid to work safely,” a small incentive or recognition can be very effective in establishing a safe working environment. This, too, is money well spent.

In smaller organizations, it is not always feasible to have an individual whose sole responsibility is safety. While organizations are becoming more cognizant of the need for full-time safety managers, coordinators and trainers, there are still those individuals who “wear many hats.” Even though this is not the ideal situation, having someone who can track and record training, ensure compliance efforts and keep lines of communication open is very valuable. This individual must be particularly supported if he or she has more than just safety responsibilities.



A pie is not that difficult to make. With a little effort, ingredients can be added and measurements adjusted to ensure that what comes out of the oven is a dessert that is enjoyable and of which everyone can be proud.

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